JULY 1951

COMMENTARY

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On the Horizon—
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The Study of Man—
Political Thinking: Ancients vs. Moderns — GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

BOOKS IN REVIEW

H. R. Trevor-Roper — Nathan Glazer — Paul Kecskemeti
Theodor H. Gaster — Alfred Werner

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★ ★ ★ ★

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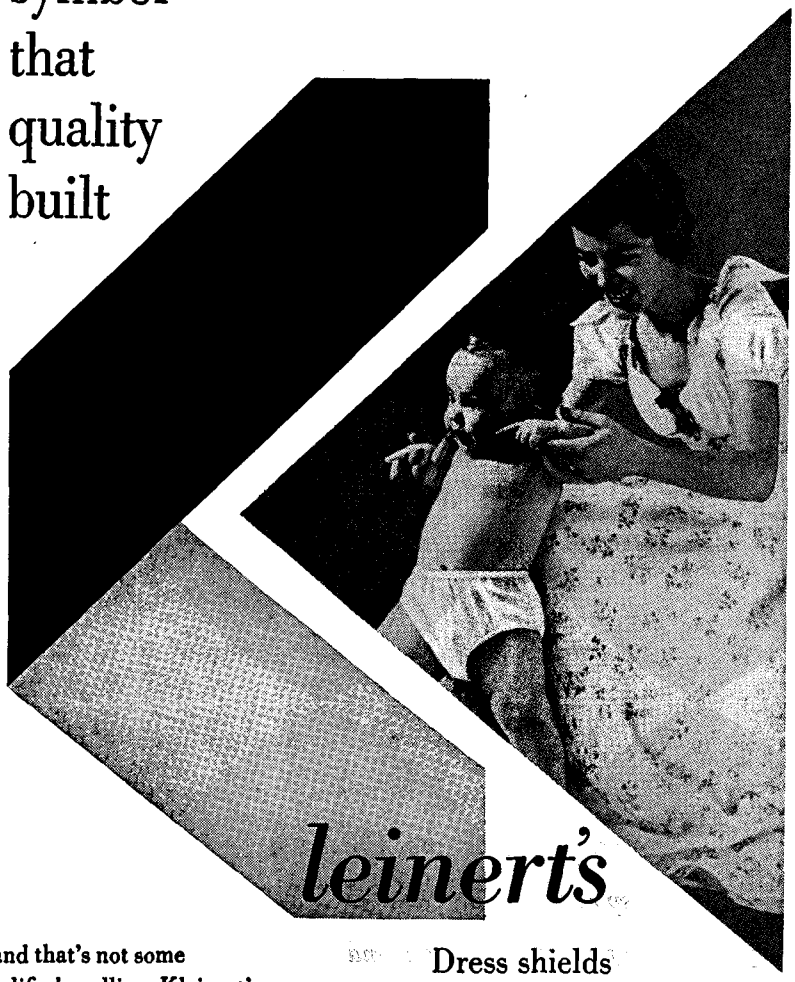

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IN FORTHCOMING ISSUES OF

COMMENTARY

Europe After the Elections *Herbert Lüthy*

The results of the recent elections in Italy and France have been disappointing to some. It would seem that the Right is increasing its popular support, while the Communist core remains fundamentally undiminished, even though suffering a loss in parliamentary strength. Does this indicate a polarization of European politics, as a result of which the democratic parties will founder and disintegrate? From Paris, Herbert Lüthy offers his analysis.

The Ninth of Av *Mark Raven*

The ninth day of the month of Av, the second most important fast day in the Jewish year, commemorates the destruction of the Temple. It is also a general day of mourning, for, according to the rabbis, all of Israel's calamities have happened and will happen on that day. Mr. Raven explores the traditions and significance of this holiday which he regards as one of the most evocative in the Jewish calendar.

Capitalism, Socialism, and Keynes *J. K. Galbraith*

The specter of the Great Depression still haunts the American mind, despite the last decade of relative prosperity. To what extent is this fear justified? Has capitalism, with the assistance of the theories of John Maynard Keynes, solved the problem of unemployment, learned to manage its business cycle? Or are we witnessing only a breathing spell in a system doomed to perpetual crisis and eventual collapse?

The Children of Light *Isa Kapp*

No mother now dares to raise a child without constant reference to at least one of the standard scientific manuals on that difficult technique. It remains a question whether this makes life any easier. In the books of Arnold Gesell and others, Miss Kapp tries to discover what is happening to Mother and Baby in the age of science.

We Seek Surah *Gerold Frank*

An account of a visit to Lodz in 1937, before death fell upon that teeming center of Jewish life.

"Homecoming" from San Nicandro *Phinn Lapide*

In the April 1948 issue of COMMENTARY, Fritz Becker told the story of the tiny Italian village of San Nicandro, which in the dark night of wartime Italy was converted en masse to Judaism. Mr. Lapide writes chapter 2: how these "new Jews" found their way to Israel and are making their special contribution to their adopted people.

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COMMENTARY

"LIMITED WAR" AS THE PATH TO PEACE

The Case for Containment

ROBERT LANGBAUM

THE dismissal of General MacArthur has brought the Western policy of "containment" into question in this country. MacArthur wanted to force an immediate military showdown with the Communists in Asia. By his resolute action against MacArthur, President Truman has made it clear that our purpose is not simply to win the war in Korea—it is primarily to avert World War III. We resisted aggression to discourage further aggression. But we do not want to take up a larger challenge than has been openly laid down. We do not want to push the enemy further in the direction of hostility than he has specifically elected to go.

What it comes down to is whether our purpose is to destroy world Communism. President Truman has made it clear that that is *not* our purpose. Our purpose is to convince the Communists that they risk too much in trying to expand by force of arms. It is to make the West so strong and the United Nations so effective that the Communists will find it to their best advantage to maneuver as they can within the international legal framework. That is what is meant by "containment."

It is understandable that such a policy should be criticized as inadequate by those forces on the right whose main interest is to launch a holy war against Communism, at once and everywhere. What is surprising, however, is that "containment" has been just as vigorously opposed by certain American liberals who—unwilling to relinquish the political signposts of the 30's—are afraid that our military and diplomatic chiefs are using the policy to ease us into a war designed to further American imperialistic interests and to crush progressive political movements at home and abroad. To be sure, these liberals know that they must, in the moment of decision, stand against Russia.

THE program of "containment," carefully worked out by American policy-makers since the end of World War II to check Communist expansion without precipitating general war, is under fierce attack from those who believe it is either too cautious or too belligerent. Both camps of critics agree that it must fail because it is insufficiently "dynamic": not (we hear from one side) attacking Communist power in the lands where it exists, or (the other joins in) strengthening, through social reform and economic revolution, the power to resist Communism in the lands it threatens. ROBERT LANGBAUM argues here that both groups of opponents—those who want a greater military effort and those who think a military effort is both useless and dangerous—fail to understand the real potential of "limited war" for remaking the world as well as checking Communism. Mr. Langbaum teaches in the English department at Cornell University. He was born in New York in 1924.

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But they have not been able quite to dispel their suspicion of a road to peace that looks so opposite from what the pacifist congresses used to recommend—a road lined on both sides with guns.

ACTUALLY, the liberal attack against "containment" has been led not by Americans but by certain French and British intellectuals who have advocated a policy of "neutralism" for Western Europe. These "neutralists" are against Communism but they are by no means for capitalism—and since they consider that the present struggle is between Russian Communism and American capitalism, they do not believe that Western Europe has any interest in it except to organize itself into a "third force" and stand as a buffer between the two combatants. This "neutralist" criticism has hit home among American liberals, who are not themselves ready to go to the wall to preserve capitalism. And yet, not being able quite so neatly to dissociate themselves from their own country's struggle, they have spoken with less assurance than their French and British counterparts. Their main role has been to transmit the "neutralist" criticism, though with some misgivings.

The "neutralist" point of view is adequately represented by an article of Jean-Paul Sartre's, "The Chances of Peace," published in the *Nation* some months ago. In its setting, the article illustrates the relation between American liberals and European "neutralists" in that it is specifically addressed to the readers of the best-known American liberal journal and states what amounts to the editorial policy of that journal—but with less equivocation. Sartre makes his "neutralist" position clear by telling us that "Western Europe can serve as a buffer zone between America and Russia only if it belongs to neither," and by advising us that the moment we cease to regard the French as "soldiers" we will rediscover them as "friends."

But more to our purpose is the fact that Sartre would have America, too, take a more neutral attitude toward Russian aggressiveness. His argument for this is self-contradictory. On the one hand, he thinks it is useless for America to attempt to rearm Western Europe because Western Europe cannot within the practicable future be made strong enough to resist Russian attack—and why therefore irritate the Russians? It is also useless because the common people are not for us: with the exception of Britain, the European democracies are divided internally "in two camps, ready, in the event of war, to tear themselves to pieces."

Having frightened us with this gloomy picture, Sartre tries, on the other hand, to assure us that there is nothing to be frightened about. After all, "two interpretations of Soviet policy have always been made in official American circles"—so why not take the more optimistic one, which is that Russia's intentions are not warlike? Besides, war is not inevitable because the Russians "are not inevitably driven to this imperialism by their economy."

The picture is at once too pessimistic and too optimistic. There is no *use* arming because the Russians are too strong; there is no *reason* to arm because the Russians wouldn't hurt a fly. This kind of self-contradictory argument appeals to that lazy part of all of us which would like to clutch at any and all justifications for the avoidance of decisive action. But it makes its particular appeal by means of certain false assumptions which linger particularly in the liberal consciousness and need clearing up.

"THIS war towards which we are heading," says Sartre, "presents a very different aspect from other wars. Ordinarily a conflict of interests is disguised as an ideological dispute. This time opposed ideologies will be disguised as conflicting interests."

Granting Sartre's assertion that the present hostility is ideological rather than economic, it seems to me that he has wrongly defined the ideological question at stake. To begin with, one is surprised to find that Sartre considers the present hostility unique because ideological. One had supposed that the war against Nazism was also ideological.

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But then it becomes apparent that Sartre, when he says "ideological," is thinking of it from the Communist viewpoint. He does not mean that the present conflict is between Eastern ideals and Western ideals. He means that the Russians are the ideologues, disinterestedly if ruthlessly translating high principles into reality, while we are the *ancien régime,* doing our best to maintain our wealth and privileges against the oncoming wave of the future. "The choice between you and the Russians," he tells us, "is one between cynics and madmen." They are the madmen, overzealous for an ideal; we are the cynics, willing to employ any recourse to protect our possessions. Thus, as Sartre sees it, World War II was—except for Russia—a mere conflict of rival capitalisms, but the present conflict is ideological in that the decadent capitalist status quo is being challenged by revolutionary Communism.

Sartre does not explicitly say this, but the assumption informs every line of his article. It explains why he is so sure that the common people of Europe and Asia will not be with us in event of war. It explains why he cannot conceive that our side might be supported for other than selfish, materialistic reasons—that it might seem, on rational reflection, the just side. Our supporters abroad are "oppressive minorities" who depend upon us to protect them against the "exploited and oppressed." The French "know both arguments," ours and the Russians', and Sartre gives us no reason to suppose that our argument comes out on top. The American public itself has acquired a war mentality, not as a natural response to Russian aggressiveness, but because it has been deliberately "blinded and exacerbated"—presumably by capitalist propaganda.

It is doubtless to the advantage of the Russians to have us think that the West is fighting to preserve capitalism. And the staunch pro-capitalists among us probably do think so. But the preservation of capitalism is not the common interest that binds together the diverse nations outside the Soviet bloc. Britain has officially repudiated capitalism. New Zealand and the Scandinavian countries can hardly be called capitalist. The socialist parties of the Continent stand with the conservative parties against the Communists because they know that capitalism is not the question at the present time. Any of our allies might nationalize its land and industry tomorrow without disturbing the alliance—provided the nationalization were not carried out by the party that takes orders from Moscow. For it is not capitalism but fear of Russia that binds together the diverse nations—whether capitalist, socialist, or feudal-agrarian—outside the Soviet bloc. Their common desire is for security. Their common interest is to support a principle of international order and, in the long run, a world sovereignty which would guarantee to nations the same protection that national sovereignties now guarantee to individuals.

That is the ideological question at stake in the present hostilities. Seen from this perspective, we are the ideologues and the real revolution of our time is taking place through the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Marshall Plan, the Benelux Customs Union, the Schuman Plan, and the American and British Commonwealth plans for the development of backward areas. Most of all, if it works out successfully, the United Nations action in Korea will prove the first decisive accomplishment of the revolution—in that a real functioning world government will have emerged from it. For a government, after all, is a concentration of power in support of a principle of order: the rest is embellishment.

I would not maintain that the motives among us are always as justifiable as our cause. We do what we can to make men better, but we do not inquire into a man's motives before we give him police protection or take his taxes. It is precisely the miracle of a social order that it can direct the energies of its members toward an interest higher than the interest each conceives for himself in supporting that order.

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It is true enough that we have, as Sartre complains, attracted to our side "Greek monarchists, Chiang Kai-shek's corrupt minions, Franco's Falange." But we used to have on our side, when the struggle was against such rightist elements as these—the Communists. And we now have Tito on our side for the same reason that we have the rightists. The reason is that our side is now, as it was in the last war, the *social* side, the side of the elements, good or bad, who for good or bad reasons want at any particular time to keep the peace. The issue is not capitalism, it is not at this stage even democracy. It is not a question of the private lives of nations but only that they do not point guns at other nations.

Roosevelt made this minimum requirement clear in his settlement with Russia at the end of the war. According to that settlement, America and Russia were to coexist, not because they would agree in political and economic practice, but because they would agree in supporting a principle of international order. Roosevelt's idea at Yalta seems to have been to make the concessions necessary to give Russia a substantial share in the status quo and thus make it advantageous for her to keep the peace. The question we now face is: does Russia think she can gain greater advantage through war than through peace, or has she determined to sacrifice immediate material advantage to promote Communist revolution?

It is surprising enough to learn from Sartre that the present hostilities are unique because they are, in contrast to World War II, ideological. But it is even more surprising to learn that we are expected to draw comfort from the fact that they are ideological. We can perhaps agree with Sartre that the Russians "are not inevitably driven to this imperialism by their economy." But we must surely hope that they are motivated by some kind of "self-interest"—if Western policy is to stand any chance of succeeding in its primary purpose: to avert World War III.

Suppose the contrary to be true—that the Russian motivation is entirely ideological. Suppose they are prepared to sacrifice immediate material advantage to promote at any price the world Communist revolution. What comfort can we draw from that? What chance does that leave for a settlement? What could we offer short of total surrender to satisfy them? Any concessions on our part would be interpreted as a sign of the weakness of the existing order and as an invitation to take further steps toward the liquidation of that order.

And suppose war does come. Sartre's prospect of an ideological war is certainly as terrifying, indeed more terrifying, than the prospect of an old-fashioned imperialistic war. The bloodiest wars of the past have been those in which, Sartre notwithstanding, the majority of the participants at least thought they were fighting over principles —religious wars, revolutions, wars of national independence. Of all pre-modern wars, the religious wars of the Reformation, culminating in the terrible Thirty Years' War, most nearly rivaled in destructiveness the wars of the 20th century.

Indeed, it was as a reaction against the excesses of the religious wars of the Reformation that the succeeding age, the Enlightenment, turned against theology and religious zeal. Having seen survival threatened by the clash of irreconcilable principles, the men of the Enlightenment made survival the primary consideration and compromise the rule for international relations. Their own wars were fought quite plainly for the sake of trade and territory, and it is interesting to note with what relative moderation these economic or imperialistic wars were fought. Most of them were fought only long enough to determine which side was stronger and then quickly ended with a compromise, with the transfer of a city or a province, with the readjustment of a boundary. We smile nowadays at the "gentlemanly" wars of the 18th century. But they were hardheaded wars of national self-interest, and the combatants reasoned, just as hardheadedly, that there was no point in losing Rome to gain Gaul—no point in

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bankrupting themselves to get rich, certainly no point in risking survival.

One has only to compare the economic wars of the 18th century with the Thirty Years' War and with the last-ditch wars of the 20th century (in which nationalism and ideology have taken the place of religion) to see that the ideological potential of the present hostilities is precisely the danger. The danger to survival has become so great in modern warfare that one wonders whether the desire for economic or territorial expansion can ever again be a sufficient cause for war. For it is not, after all, the standard of living, but only the conviction that it is better to be destroyed than forced to give up a particular way of life, that could impel a nation to risk the annihilation of itself and the rest of the world. That or an insane nihilism—a possibility which we dare not, since Hitler, entirely overlook.

An ideological struggle always involves, of course, a question of the most fundamental self-interest—cultural survival. Both East and West will fight in a showdown, and both will justify such a war as a war for survival. At the same time they will be aware how little chance they stand of surviving the war for survival. They will identify the ideological question with a question of the most fundamental self-interest; but in fighting for the ideology, they will sacrifice the self-interest. That is the predicament we face as of 1951. Sartre suggests one way out—for the West to back down: to pull out of Korea, to make no attempt at rearmament, to do nothing, in short, to irritate the Russians. He does not conceive such a course as betrayal since we have (remember!) no ideology other than the purely negative one of stemming the tide of Communist ideology. He is, however, inconsistent in that he does not fully face up to the implications of his position. He talks as though we could pursue the course he advocates and still retain the power and prosperity which he considers to be the only things we care about anyway.

Two British "neutralists," Herbert Read and Alex Comfort, are more consistent. In a joint letter to the British Labor weekly, the *New Statesman and Nation*, February 10, they go further than Sartre—they advocate the immediate and total disarmament of Britain. But they also announce their readiness to stand by the consequences. Rather than risk annihilation in atomic warfare, they are ready to accede to any and all Russian demands, even if it means surrendering national independence. Set forth this way, the "neutralist" position is logically unassailable since it would, if adopted, undoubtedly eliminate the danger of war.

It is assailable, however, on empiric grounds—the inescapable fact being that few of us are entirely free of reservations as to how far we would be willing to give in. This being so, our temporary complaisance would encourage the Russians to approach the limit of our endurance and we would be weakening ourselves for the eventual resistance. Are we thus thrown back upon the other disastrous alternative posed by the "neutralists"—to prepare for all-out war?

FORTUNATELY, there is the conceivable third way out which Western policy, by a kind of inevitable avoidance of greater evils, in fact adopted. As early as five years ago, Aldous Huxley was able to predict the present condition of "limited warfare," on the basis of historical analogy. In a brilliant passage of the foreword to a new edition of *Brave New World*, Huxley develops the analogy I have already touched upon, between the war-ridden first half of the 20th century and the war-ridden age of the Reformation. He suggests that the lesson of Hiroshima may cause us to react against the period 1914-45 in the same way in which the men of the Enlightenment reacted against the Thirty Years' War:

"The unimaginable horrors of the Thirty Years' War," Huxley writes, "actually taught men a lesson, and for more than a hundred years the politicians and generals of Europe consciously resisted the temptation to use their military resources to the limits of destructiveness or (in the majority of conflicts) to go on fighting until the enemy was

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totally annihilated. They were aggressors, of course, greedy for profit and glory; but they were also conservatives, determined at all costs to keep their world intact, as a going concern. In the last thirty years there have been no conservatives; there have been only nationalistic radicals of the right and nationalistic radicals of the left. The last conservative statesman was the Fifth Marquess of Lansdowne; and when he wrote a letter to the *Times,* suggesting that the First World War should be concluded with a compromise, as most of the wars of the eighteenth century had been, the editor of that once conservative journal refused to print it. The nationalistic radicals had their way, with the consequences that we all know—Bolshevism, Fascism, inflation, depression, Hitler, the Second World War, the ruin of Europe and all but universal famine."

Huxley's analysis of our mistake in World War I is interesting because we were told during the last war that our mistake in 1918 had been precisely that we did compromise—that we ought never to have consented to an armistice until we had carried the fight into Germany and had occupied Berlin. We made it a point not to commit the same "mistake" in 1945. And having learned a lesson from the events that led up to the last war we are now making it a point not to compromise with—not to "appease," we call it—the forces of aggression. But Huxley would have us learn another lesson. He would have us learn "from Hiroshima as much as our forefathers learned from Magdeburg"—that the primary consideration is survival, to keep our world "intact as a going concern."

IT IS a lesson most of us are only too anxious to learn—at least on this side of the Iron Curtain. The question is about the other side. There is every reason to believe that Chamberlain was being in Huxley's sense "conservative" when he went to Munich. He was willing to make whatever adjustments of the status quo might be necessary to preserve it. He failed in the end, but few people would maintain that it was because he didn't grant Hitler enough. He failed because Hitler could not for any price be induced to share the "conservative" interest in a "going concern."

Nor was Roosevelt a "nationalistic radical" at Yalta. He was being "conservative"—willing to overlook ideological differences for the sake of mutual survival. It is still too early to know whether he has finally failed—whether the Russians will not for any price be induced to share our interest in a "going concern." Meanwhile Sartre, Read, Comfort, *et al.,* would probably maintain that they are carrying on Roosevelt's work in advocating that we do nothing to raise bars against a community with the Russians. They would be wrong, however, to the extent that they are less "realistic" than Roosevelt. Roosevelt did not assume that the West would be willing to acquiesce indefinitely. The positive side of Roosevelt's policy, the side he pursued at Yalta, was to make it advantageous for the Russians not to fight by giving them a substantial share in the status quo. The negative—and equally indispensable—side of his policy, the side we are now being forced to pursue, is to make it advantageous for the Russians not to fight by doing everything we can to boost the cost to them of war.

In the same way, Huxley does not expect that the lesson of Hiroshima is going to eliminate conflict from the world. The best he hopes for, if we are so wise as to have learned a lesson, is a "period, not indeed of peace, but of limited and only partially ruinous warfare." He envisions the kind of situation we now have in Korea: in which each side does the best for itself that it can, even resorting to arms—but always within the limits of an unwritten agreement that mutual annihilation is not to be risked and that mutual survival is to remain at all costs the primary consideration.

THE anomalous policy of the United Nations in regard to Korea indicates that our side, at least, is operating within such limits. When it was only a question of the

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North Koreans, the United Nations supported all measures necessary to bring the fighting to a speedy conclusion. But as soon as the Chinese became participants, as soon as the danger arose of an extension of the conflict, we began to hear the phrase "limited warfare." Only after much hesitation did the United Nations decide to resist the Chinese aggression, and then with the clear provision that we would not carry resistance to its logical conclusion—all-out war against China.

Before the Chinese participation, the United Nations forces crossed the 38th Parallel with the purpose of taking all North Korea. But when United Nations forces approached the Parallel again, after having retreated before the Chinese offensive, General Ridgway assured them that it would be a "tremendous victory for the United Nations" if the war ended with our forces in control up to the Parallel. And it is now understood that United Nations forces are to cross the Parallel only far enough to keep the enemy off balance and insure the safety of our troops. MacArthur opposed this policy and his dismissal reaffirms it in unmistakable terms.

How about the Chinese (and Russians)—are they too conducting a "limited war" in Korea? It is difficult to say. Walter Lippmann suggested some time ago that there exists a tacit agreement by which we grant the Chinese sanctuary behind the Yalu and in return the Chinese (and Russians) do not contest our control of the air in Korea. The idea sounded fantastic at the time. But it seems borne out by the Chinese offensive this spring which was conducted with a notable lack of air support, even though we had heard before it began of an air build-up in Manchuria. We have since announced—again bearing out Lippmann—our intention of bombing Manchurian airfields if the Chinese show air strength in Korea. This leaves it squarely up to the Communists to decide how "limited" the war is to be.

It is difficult to know what to make of the Chinese tactic of melting away after their first appearance in Korea last fall, and again this winter after their offensive had threatened to drive us off the peninsula. These withdrawals may have been dictated entirely by military necessity. But it is not, I think, extravagant to suggest that the Chinese might find it dangerous to defeat us too drastically since we would then be forced to bring our full power to bear against them. And it might, in the same way, be dangerous for us to defeat the Chinese so drastically as to threaten the security of the Peiping regime, for then Russia might find it necessary to intervene. Some kind of stalemate would seem to be, at present, the best that both sides can hope for. Certainly General Marshall, in his recent Senate testimony, held out no better hope. With a stalemate, the United Nations would be able to show that while it does not mean to threaten the Communist homelands, the Communists cannot get away with aggression. And the Communists would be able to pull out of a mistaken venture with a minimum loss of face. Should the stalemate extend beyond Korea to become a general *modus vivendi* with Communism in the Far East, so much the better.

Such a stalemate would prove that the original diplomatic division of Korea is practically justifiable in terms of power. It would prove that, all things considered, neither side has the will or power to push the other out of Korea—that Korea represents a limit of power of the Communist and non-Communist worlds and therefore a "natural" boundary between them.

One can conceive how, in the immediate future, similar tests might be applied against other weak spots along the line between the two worlds—in which case the United Nations would have to rush reinforcements to whatever spot showed need of plugging up. But if the immediate future follows what seems to be shaping up as the pattern of the present, this apparent chaos would be governed by a strict though unwritten code. First, it would be understood that the test could not be applied in crucial areas.

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Russia might conceivably play the Korean game again in Indo-China, Malaya, Finland; less conceivably, in Iran or Yugoslavia. But she will not play it in Germany or Japan, unless she has already made up her mind for another world war.

Second, it would be understood that each conflict was to be treated separately and localized. As I have said earlier, neither side would take up a larger challenge than had been specifically laid down. Neither would push the other further in the direction of hostility than it had specifically elected to go. What power would enforce such a code? The new devil-deity, the perpetual overhanging threat of the Bomb.

IT IS a sad comment on our time that an uneasy deadlock, a future of "limited warfare," should be the best we can hope for. Yet most Americans—and perhaps most Russians too—prefer it to total war or total surrender. I see no fourth more cheerful possibility unless we suppose a miraculous change of heart on one or both sides—a consummation we all wish for devoutly provided the change does not take place on our side.

How long can such an uneasy deadlock endure and what will it lead to? Each side can hope that its own prosperity, coupled with the other's decline, will gain for it a bloodless victory. Or time, by introducing new problems, may render obsolete the problems that now beset us. In fifty years there will no longer be the same Russia and America as today. The "givens" will have changed and with them, for better or worse, the alignments and problems. Meanwhile, our job would necessarily be to weather the immediate future, to play for time.

The job is essentially one of conservation —to keep our world "intact as a going concern" by defending it, on the one hand, against attack from without and, on the other hand, by not committing it to a struggle which, win or lose, it could not possibly survive. For all we know, the Russians may be conceiving the same job for themselves as regards the Communist world. It is a job which requires the utmost suppleness. And since suppleness has never been a strong point of democratic policy, the job is going to be more difficult in the 20th century than it was in the monarchical 18th, and more difficult for us than for the Russians.

Public opinion is slow to form and slow to change, and can create a dangerous momentum carrying us further in a given direction than we ought to go and beyond the point where we ought to have changed to another direction. The MacArthur opposition is currently riding that momentum. The General has logic on his side when he tells the American public that in war there is no substitute for victory. There is a simple and satisfying consistency in the conclusion that the same principle that led us to undertake the Korean war ought to lead us to do everything possible to win it. Read and Comfort are also, for that matter, logical when they advocate unilateral disarmament to prevent war. The trouble with both extremes is that they do not take enough *facts* into consideration.

Read and Comfort do not consider that most people are simply not ready to give in indefinitely. MacArthur does not consider the world context of the Korean war—that doing everything possible to win the Korean war may diminish our chance of winning the crucial war, if it comes to war: and that it means in any case the almost certain failure of our primary purpose, to avert a general war. The MacArthur controversy shows very clearly at least one danger of "containment"—that popular pressure may force the government to take up a larger challenge than has been specifically laid down. If we are to succeed in our primary purpose, the public is going to have to learn to seek not a simple consistency of principle, but the consistency of principle with *fact* and *purpose*. Pragmatic liberalism, with its suspicion of principle and its respect for fact and purpose, with its respect above all for the strenuous and unabating use of mind, is eminently suited to undertake this formidable job of education.

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LIBERALS are also suited to counteract another danger of "containment," coming this time from the professional diplomats. I mean the danger that "containment" will turn into ossification, that diplomats will take the easiest way to keep our world "intact"—by blocking social change at home and abroad. This danger has particularly worried liberals, many of whom oppose "containment" because of it. Those liberals are wrong, however, who assume that "containment" must necessarily be a policy obstructive of change.

There is no reason why we cannot preserve our world at the roots without inhibiting or constricting its growth. If we meet the threat of Communist aggression by banding together to uphold international law and order, if we break down national barriers and try to cure economic and social ills—what does that do but insure growth? The name "containment" is perhaps unfortunate because it suggests that we are marking time. But the things we are doing to preserve our collective life (the Marshall Plan, the Schuman Plan, the Council of Europe, aid to backward areas, the strengthening of the UN Assembly) have already wrought important changes. They constitute the real revolution of our age.

Huxley, in the foreword I have cited, predicts that the period of "limited warfare" will bring cultural decline and universal totalitarianism. The danger is real but liberals cannot accept doom as inevitable. At the same time that they defend "containment" against those who think war inevitable, they must keep up a constant criticism of the policy itself, pointing out faults in its execution. This criticism is already under way and will probably form the main subject for public discussion in the immediate future.

One writer warns that the Communists are riding into power in still feudal countries, not on a collectivist platform, but on a platform rightfully belonging to us—agrarian reform, catering to the peasants' desire to own the land they work on. Another warns against sacrificing, in the name of the emergency, university education and other so-called "luxuries" of a high civilization, lest we lose our civilization in the process of trying to save it. Almost any issue of any liberal journal includes these days at least one article warning against the use of anti-Communist hysteria to prevent the bold functioning of democracy. Liberals must carry this criticism of the execution of the policy of "containment" into the arena of practical politics where it can become effective.

Disaster threatens whichever way we turn—war, surrender, cultural decline. A false step even in the best direction could ruin us. That is why it is dangerous to use nationalistic or ideological catchwords to enlist public support for the fight against aggression; it is dangerous to stir up irrational impulses. For, in a democracy, such impulses can create a blind force, a momentum beyond control; and we need, above all, control at every step. We are fighting to establish the primacy of law in international affairs, and we must be able to proceed with the same dogged patience, the same dispassionate fairmindedness for which the British and American courts of law are so justly famous. If we could proceed against aggressors not because they had offended us as Americans but because they had offended the law of nations, we would be acting in the proper spirit and establishing precedents constructive of a world society. We would also be so secure of the disinterestedness of our motives that we would be able to make the pragmatic adjustment of principle to fact and purpose without breaking down in disillusionment as did the generation of World War I.

We need, as never before in history, sheer mind and sober responsibility on the part of everyone. We need the qualities of mind and heart which liberalism, when it lives up to its own best tradition, has it in its power to give.

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HAS ANTI-COMMUNISM WRECKED OUR LIBERTIES?

The Liberals' Role in the Fight Against Subversion

ROBERT BENDINER

RARE is the traveler who returns from Europe or Asia these days without a full complement of gloomy tales about the anti-American sentiment he has encountered—in all countries and among all groups, sometimes subtle and edgy, sometimes shrill and contemptuous. Among the ingredients of this hostility are the hardy perennials of anti-Americanism which we have known for half a century: that we are crass materialists, that our culture is in Hollywood and our strength in Wall Street; that, pampered with wealth, we are the only nation in history to go from barbarism to decadence without ever being civilized. To this there has been added over the past few decades the inevitable scorn that declining powers feel towards a successor, and the very human distaste of unwilling beneficiaries for a benefactor.

These dim views of our national character we are learning to endure. But in the swelling chorus of resentment there is a new and alarming note. Whereas our democracy was once belittled, and at the same time envied, as the luxury of a rich and isolated nation, we are now attacked for the alleged undoing of that democracy. Especially among liberals and in labor circles abroad we are damned for a hysterical surrender to repression, suppression, McCarthyism, and black reaction. Thus a correspondent of London's *New Statesman and Nation* can soberly report:

"The drive for conformity with 'true Americanism' is intensified: properly to qualify, the citizen would need a purity certificate from the Un-American Affairs Committee, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Hearst newspapers. Among those unable to qualify, fear of the informer strikes restraint even into private conversation. There are few Americans apart from the residents of some big cities and the comparatively small group of college teachers and intellectuals—the kind of people who read the *Nation* or *New Republic*—who today have much chance to read or hear dissenting opinions. . . . What remains of the Left looks, as I was told again and again, almost pathetically, to Britain."

So accepted, indeed, is this belief, that it is quite the thing for the liberal press of Europe to equate the United States and the Soviet Union as political menaces of the same order. An "English Observer" writes in the letter columns of the same journal: "Hysteria looks much the same in whatever interest it is whipped up, and except for a difference of vocabulary the similarity between such expressions of feeling [in the United States] and those that emanate from the other side of the Iron Curtain is startling."

Granting a difference "on the plane of humanity" between subjecting dissidents to forced labor in Russia and depriving them of their livelihood and reputation in America, the correspondent finds that "on the plane of freedom the distinction is very slight." Dissidents here have been silenced just as effectively: "Discussion, not of the ethics, but even of the practical consequences of

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Is it really becoming impossible to express unpopular political views in this country? Are we living through something equivalent to the "Palmer raids" following World War I—or something worse? Has "McCarthyism" blanketed our campuses and the American landscape generally with a fog of fear and dull conformity? ROBERT BENDINER, formerly managing editor of the *Nation,* and now a free-lance writer, here reviews the civil liberties scene and considers how well our fundamental rights are bearing up under the strains and pressures of the "cold war." Mr. Bendiner's article "Has the American Voter Swung Right?" appeared in the January COMMENTARY.

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the Korean war, of the admission of Communist China to the UN, goes on only behind closed doors. The rift between what you can say in your own living room and what you can say in public is already clear and wide."

Similar commentary on the decline of American freedom may be culled at random from the press of the Continent. The burden of the song is that so rampant is our anti-Communist hysteria, so advanced the trend to some sort of American police state, that the average European would do well to adopt the plague-on-both-your-houses attitude, or "neutralism," as it is called. "Those two technocracies that think themselves antagonists," François Mauriac wrote in *Le Figaro*, "are dragging humanity in the same direction of dehumanization. . . ."

How has it come about that this distorted picture of the United States has gained such widespread acceptance among intelligent people, themselves anti-Communist, so soon after our wartime friendship and while our aid is still a major factor in their economic recovery?

IN PART, at least, the answer lies in those two extremes of American public opinion that by sheer lung power have monopolized the foreground: those who in fact do their utmost to generate "anti-Red" hysteria, and those who are eager at every moment to cry hysteria, either out of neurotic fear or to sharpen political axes of their own.

To view the United States in any reasonable perspective, it is essential to know that both these extremes exist, and that they are important and destructive forces. But at this juncture in our national life, it is equally important to understand and to state explicitly that these two extremes do not represent the republic. It is no service to liberalism, to the country, or to truth, to deny or belittle the inroads being made by the McCarthys on the constitutional liberties of Americans. Neither is it a service to liberalism, to the country, or to truth, to proclaim to the world that we are in the grip of panic, that no man dares speak his mind, and that out of a nightmarish fear of Russia, American liberals have surrendered to the forces of militarism and repression.

To look first at the dark side of the moon, the past eighteen months must admittedly be put down as a period of dangerous nonsense in American public life. It was what George R. Stewart called "The Year of the Oath"—the year that the faculty members of the far-flung University of California were forced to swear that they were loyal Americans rather than subversive scoundrels in disguise, or else forfeit their posts. Many preferred the loss of their jobs to surrender, but in all the turbulence that rocked the state's campuses only two alleged Communists were smoked out—a teaching assistant at Berkeley and a pianist in the women's gymnasium at UCLA. The loyalty-oath mania—unquestionably the most fatuous means of fighting Communism that has yet been devised, since it affects almost anybody but Communists—spread rapidly. Quasi-public institutions like the Columbia Broadcasting System adopted it for all its employees, even if their sole function was to sing the praises of mild laxatives and detergents. And volunteers for defense work in New York City originally had to state whether even in the distant past they had ever belonged to outfits like the League Against War and Fascism before they could qualify as nurses' aides.

This was also the year in which sensational trials—Hiss, Remington, Coplon, Bridges, and the top echelon of the Communist party—were accompanied by running diatribes and fulsome prejudgments in the press that made our more judicial-minded friends in England and Canada wince in disbelief. It was the year in which a few individuals protested against Jean Muir in the television role of Mother Aldrich because long ago, it was said, she had belonged to fellow-traveling organizations; whereupon General Foods, fearing a possible decline in Jello consumption, withdrew its sponsorship of the retroactive sinner.

In Hollywood a frightened movie producer abandoned a projected film on the

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Hiawatha legend for fear that the peace-pipe ceremony might be linked to the Stockholm Peace Petition. Birmingham summarily ordered the exile of all Communists on a few days' notice, regardless of the jobs they held or the property they were forced to abandon. The cities of Macon and Jacksonville quickly followed suit, while other communities demanded the instant registration of all Communists and members of supposedly fellow-traveling organizations. Fall River and Detroit forbade the distribution of any literature deemed subversive by the local police chief, and the mayor of Los Angeles urged citizens to report to the police anybody they thought suspicious, giving assurance that the accused would not be told who had accused them.

Above all, this was the time of McCarthyism, the cool employment, on high political levels, of the "big lie," and of the McCarran Act, which incorporated into law the evil principle of penalizing persons not for present activity but for associations they may have had twenty years ago. Under Section 22 of this statute, which originally (it has since been amended) barred from our shores anyone who is or ever was a member of a totalitarian organization, even in childhood or out of hunger, it seemed for a time that the opera and concert season would have to be confined to Ellis Island. The effect of this imbecility abroad may be gauged from an editorial that appeared at the time in *Il Messagero,* a conservative newspaper published in Rome. Said that daily, in part: "The immense power of the USA must have popular backing to maintain its prestige. If, however, certain events create disgust and people are tempted to shut off the radio when the 'Voice of America' comes on, we have serious reason to be worried. The internment of Italians on Ellis Island was perfectly in accord with anti-American propaganda, not with the 'Voice of America.' Merely an example of American silliness, it may be said. But America of today, the America that is leading the Western world, cannot afford silliness."

It is this same McCarran law that calls for the registration of all organizations, with their officers and in some cases their members, which are deemed subversive by the Attorney General, the curious belief being that those bent on undermining the state will come forward and declare their subversive intentions.

MUCH more along this line could be cited, all to our discredit. No one with a modicum of concern for the traditions of democracy will want to minimize these acts or justify them. But to suggest that dissenting opinion in this country has been silenced, that Americans look over their shoulders when they talk, that political discussion goes on only behind closed doors, that as a people we are cut off from world opinion, and that a whole apparatus of informers, secret police, and terrorism has been imposed on the country—this is to conjure up a picture so far from reality that it either constitutes willful deception or borders on the psychopathic. To compare our loyalty procedures with the Russian purges, our trials with those conducted by Mr. Vishinsky, or the behavior of the FBI with that of the MVD; to infer that the difference between the United States and the USSR in the matter of liberty is merely an irrelevant difference in the degree of suppression, is to recall certain "neutrals" of another day. I refer to those America Firsters and Communist fellow-travelers of 1939 and 1940—Colonel McCormick and Earl Browder were at one in the matter—who made similar comparisons. There was no point in siding with Britain, they said, because if Hitler was brutal to the Jews and the Czechs, look what England had done in India. Damn them both with an even hand, and never mind how monstrous the difference in degree.

For the present distortions, both here and abroad, some American liberals bear, at least on two counts, a heavy share of responsibility. And these are the very counts that have made them ineffective in resisting the damage that really has been done to the structure of our civil liberties. The first count is their failure to see and to interpret

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the wave of anti-Communism in its proper context. After years of ridiculing every serious contention that the Communist party was, at its top level, a conscious and active political conspiracy; of minimizing its capacity for mischief and insisting that it was merely another political party entitled to all the rights enjoyed by Republicans, Democrats, and Socialists, these liberal victims of self-delusion find it hard to face the evidence that in addition to Red-baiters there are also Reds. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the Hiss trial, in this connection at least, was the revelation that there really were Communists in government, however few, and that they did use their official posts for espionage, as charged. Even those who cling to a faith in Hiss's innocence cannot doubt that Whittaker Chambers did in fact work through government employees in transmitting secret documents to Russian agents.

On top of revelations of routine espionage came the even more shocking blow of the atomic spy trials. While it is by no means to be assumed that all American Communists would have done what the Rosenbergs did—few, I think, would—the facts remain that a Soviet plot to obtain our atomic secrets did exist; that the Russians worked through individual American Communists whose loyalty to the Soviet Union clearly transcended any other; that the plot was fantastically successful; and that the event was aired in a period of nerve-wracking tension during which the USSR several times brought the world to the brink of the most appalling of all wars.

To this picture must be added the further facts—and they are not figments of a Hearst rewrite man's imagination—that Russia sees the United States as her principal enemy, that her delegates in the United Nations and elsewhere lose no opportunity to slander this country in the most intemperate and provocative terms, and that Communist aggression has already cost us more than sixty thousand casualties in Korea and forced us into a semi-military economy. Where the defeat of fascism left us with the hope of an era of peace and plenty, the brutal belligerence of the Kremlin has introduced one of profound disillusionment and suspicion, and has raised the corroding fear that ultimately we will have only the choice between bowing to worldwide tyranny and fighting a war in which victor and vanquished alike may go down in ruin. Throughout this campaign of blackmail and truculence, the Soviet Union has had, as always, the unfailingly zealous support of Communist parties everywhere except Yugoslavia. And these parties make it a principle to be covert, devious, and conspiratorial in their activities.

Viewed in this perspective, the present temper of the country is at least understandable in terms other than hysteria. Ultimately, the source of our troubles is not the McCarthys and the McCarrans—in normal times there would be no trouble keeping them in their place; the source lies in that Russian-fomented conflict which allows a McCarthy to exploit the very real fears and resentments of a people who want only to be left in peace. McCarthyism is a reflection, however ugly and serious, of the international position that has been forced upon us by Soviet aggression. The point is not that repression in any of its forms should be tolerated—the health of our democracy depends on our fighting it—but that it cannot be fought as an isolated evil or apart from the larger evil which gave it birth and keeps it alive. That is a fact which liberals here and in Europe can ignore only at their peril.

Decrying the "hysteria" over here, our British and Continental friends sometimes point out that they are in even greater peril than we and yet manage to remain calm in the face of the Communist threat. There is a plausibility about this argument, and perhaps some merit. But one can speculate on just how much European calmness is a product of dignified courage and how much the fatalism — or prudent opportunism — of those in an exposed position. Western Europeans appear to be torn between a desire for assurance that we will come to their

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aid in time to prevent the overrunning of their countries and a lively awareness that if they *are* overrun, ultimate liberation will come too late for those who took the anti-Communist lead before the storm broke.

THE second count against those who so intently cry hysteria is the wholly one-sided picture of America that they paint, and that, because of a curious astigmatism, they undoubtedly believe to be the complete view. Having touched on the outstanding instances of anti-libertarianism in the country, we might do well to look at some of the counterbalancing factors. European intellectuals have undoubtedly heard stories, for example, of government employees being grilled, probed, and investigated on the basis of hearsay or past associations. But how many of them know that of 3,225,000 present or prospective government workers, only 15,209 (less than half of 1 per cent) were even subjected to investigation; that with more than half of their investigations completed all the departmental loyalty boards together have recommended the dismissal of only 530 persons (.016 of 1 per cent); and that of these, 222 were cleared on appeal or granted new hearings, leaving a grand total of 308 persons dismissed (.009 of 1 per cent)? Add to this the fact that the Supreme Court has now ruled out of order the Attorney General's arbitrary manner of drawing up his list of supposedly subversive organizations on which charges of damaging association were based, and you have a procedure which, if open to serious criticism, is still something considerably less than hysterical.

By the same token, the country and the world know about the inane loyalty oath that a board of regents tried to inflict on the faculty of the University of California. But do they know that after a determined fight eighteen members of that faculty sued for the return of their jobs and were upheld by the District Court of Appeal, and that they have the support of the state's Republican governor? As this is written, a similar revolt is in progress in Oklahoma, where faculty members of two of the state's largest universities have flatly refused to sign a loyalty oath and intend to carry their fight to the courts.

More of this militance is needed, as it always is, but the fear and apathy that appears to pervade many of our campuses is a rather subtle compound. Kalman Seigel has pointed out, in an excellent survey in the New York *Times*, that it is true in part that the wariness of students in matters political is based on fear of being tagged a Communist; but it is also a product of the uncertainty of the times, of "a mature awareness of the true nature of Communism" that makes them genuinely anxious to steer clear of the involvements that trapped their campus predecessors of a decade ago. Mr. Seigel is impressed with the effects of "repressionism" on college life—with which we are generally familiar—but it is plain from his study that these have already begotten a counter-movement, and he cites numerous examples. A socialist history teacher in Chattanooga speaks of the "complete academic freedom" he enjoys to expound his views, both socialist and pacifist. The president of the University of Washington, where three faculty members were dismissed for alleged pro-Communist activity a few years ago, publicly condemns McCarthyism and boasts of the retention of a Marxist on his faculty. At the University of California itself there appears to be the freest discussion of the touchy Far Eastern situation and of the merits of the very oath which so disrupted the faculty. Nor should it be overlooked that Owen B. Lattimore, one of McCarthy's prime targets and still a highly controversial figure, was welcomed back to Johns Hopkins with a big testimonial dinner; and that, although the university's board of trustees includes some of Baltimore's most conservative citizens, Lattimore continues to head its Walter Hines Page School of International Relations.

Those who seem to revel in talk of hysteria might be reminded of another California court, whose judges granted bail to Harry Bridges with the words: ". . . how-

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ever hard and disagreeable may be the task in times of popular passion and excitement, it is the duty of the courts to set their faces like flint against this erosive subversion of the judicial process." Then there are the federal courts in the District of Columbia, which have repeatedly thrown out contempt cases cited to them by Congress, on the ground that the possible self-incrimination pleaded by the defendants was a valid claim. It is all very well to say that these and other instances of "the judicial process standing up . . . well," to quote Max Lerner, indicate the existence rather than the absence of hysteria, with the judiciary standing as a barrier. But the courts, too, are part of America and their behavior is integral to the picture. What is more, their decisions have yet to be questioned by even the most rabid of the McCarthyites, or to evoke any resentment on the part of press or public. Yet both the latter have been quick enough in the past to protest against judicial decisions when feeling really ran high, as many a Western judge can attest who upheld foreclosure proceedings during the depression.

Just as our European critics know little of the standards observed and maintained by our courts, so they know little or nothing of other aspects of our resistance to hysteria. They are no doubt familiar with the Jean Muir case, but it is unlikely that they know of the American Broadcasting Company's refusal to dismiss Gypsy Rose Lee under precisely the same kind of pressure, this time from the American Legion, because her name, like Miss Muir's, appeared in *Red Channels*. Or that for so refusing, this network was awarded the George Foster Peabody radio award for "its courageous stand in resisting organized pressure." Or that neither the network's stand nor the award drew any fire from a supposedly berserk population. It might be added in this connection that as a result of protests by the public—even Miss Muir's accusers disapproved of her summary dismissal without a hearing—the entire broadcasting industry has adopted a plan by which anyone charged with Communist sympathies is permitted to answer the charges fully and confidentially, and his reply can be seen only on request by a potential sponsor. Perhaps any individual's politics are his private affair and the whole procedure is silly and needless, but Communist politics are no longer regarded as normal political activity, and I cite these developments merely to indicate a moderation which is hardly characteristic of hysteria. I might similarly mention the recent award of "Oscars" to Judy Holliday and José Ferrer only a few days after their names had been linked to "front organizations" by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, which supposedly has all Hollywood in a sweat of terror.

The FBI has been criticized, apparently with cause, for trying to discredit Max Lowenthal just before publication of his hostile book about that agency. Yet the fact is that the book not only appeared as scheduled but was rather well received by reviewers. By the same token, the Warner Brothers picture "I Was a Communist for the FBI" won rather sour notices from the critics, at least in the metropolitan area, on the ground that it was exaggerated melodrama, dangerous in some of its implications, and too black and white in its characterizations to be plausible. In short, we have a merciful distance to go before our federal police agency commands the fearful awe with which Russians rightly look upon their MVD. It might be well, too, to remark how the attempt to smear Anna Rosenberg not only failed utterly to deny her the high post of Assistant Secretary of Defense, but drew sharp rebukes from all but the lunatic fringe of the press and boomeranged violently against her accusers.

There has been no attempt, so far as I know, seriously to carry out the Draconian municipal ordinances mentioned above, and after the first flurry of imitations, activity of this nature against Communists petered out. The chances are that those who played a part in the enactment of the ordinances in

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Birmingham, Jacksonville, and elsewhere had little serious expectation that they would be enforced or that they could possibly be sustained in the courts. And this, indeed, is a crucial aspect of the whole current period. Much of it is noise—from the extreme right and the extreme left—noise deliberately emitted for ulterior political purposes and having little actual effect on the bulk of the population. In this respect our anti-Communism is vastly different from the reactionary drive led by A. Mitchell Palmer in the early 1920's. The underlying purpose of that earlier campaign was to head off the rising trade union movement by identifying it with Bolshevism. And it was marked by violence, terrorism, wholesale deportations, and physical brutality, with the executive arm of the government itself lifted against the victim. The resort to undemocratic methods today is, by contrast, the reaction to a very real and grave threat from abroad; it is stubbornly opposed by a President who characteristically refuses to throw Mr. Acheson to the mob; and it has been marked neither by violence nor by patent miscarriages of justice.

IN NONE of what I have said, I hope, will there be thought to be self-congratulation where none is called for. To set down the mere fact that there is less political lawlessness in 1951 than there was in 1921 would hardly be worth one's while. I am aware, further, that such ugly tendencies as we have been witnessing call for vigorous opposition rather than what may appear to be a smug satisfaction that matters are no worse than they are. But defenders of liberty have a duty to do more than simply wail over McCarthyism. They have an obligation to fight the enemies of liberty on both the right and the left. This means recognizing and opposing the Communists and their champions for what they are, no matter how much aid and comfort that might give the McCarthys of the country; and it means combating the McCarthys themselves for their crass attempts to exploit the justified hostility toward Communists for their own political purposes. This cannot be done by crying "Hysteria!" every time a Communist is exposed, on the ground that his political beliefs are private.

The need, in short, is for perspective. Jeremiads have so long been a staple among liberals that many of us have come to feel there is something shameful in ever admitting the possibility that all is not as black as pitch in our society. Normally the grimness of this view has a tonic value of a bitter sort, but in the present worldwide struggle of ideologies it borders on the irresponsible. Distorted and one-sided, it serves to breed defeatism at home and to repel our allies abroad. The present wave of repressive demagogy can be checked—as its precursors have always been checked—without in the meantime giving the rest of the world the impression that it has only a hopeless choice between two Joes named Stalin and McCarthy.

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WHAT EXISTENTIALISM OFFERS MODERN MAN

A Philosophy of Fundamental Human Realities

WILLIAM BARRETT

AMID all the hubbub a few years ago about the Existentialist movement in France, it seems that nobody, not even the Existentialists themselves, took the trouble to make one cardinal point that would have cleared up a great deal of misunderstanding. Yet this point is a very simple one, so simple that it is surprising that it got lost in the scuffle. It is nothing less than the fact that Existentialism is not a philosophy at all—at least not the kind of philosophy that should have stirred the professional contentiousness of the various philosophic schools now current in America. This does not mean that Existentialism is merely a brand of impassioned rhetoric, which it may have been in some of its adherents, or merely a new literary genre—perhaps, worst of all, only a clumsy effort at poetry. On the contrary, it has a very good right to the name "philosophy," almost, we might say, a right of primogeniture. Its aim, in fact, is nothing less than to restore to this name its ancient and primitive meaning, a meaning which covers much of the territory we moderns assign to religion, and one which centuries of specialized learning have obscured. Unless we understand this point, we shall not understand what is at the center of Existentialism, and therefore shall not see how it is related to our time and what it can hope to do for us.

Nietzsche once observed, in one of those passing pregnant asides that constitute the real richness of his work, that the achievement of a philosophy was an altogether different business for the modern European (of Nietzsche's time) than it was for ancient man or even for the modern Oriental. When we speak of a man as having a "philosophy," we tend immediately to think of this as something he has to tell us, to convey verbally, rather than as a truth that has been lived. A philosophy, thus, is taken as a system of propositions held to be true on purely intellectual or rational grounds. But for the ancients, and for the Orientals, the business of achieving a philosophy was one that engaged the whole man, his total being, and was not pursued simply as one specialized department of knowledge among others. In the spirit of Nietzsche's remark, Kierkegaard had attacked the Hegelian professors of his time as being philosophers without any real philosophic existence: they had a system of propositions to teach but the system itself was a means of forgetting the concrete realities of human life.

Now, so far as philosophy exists at all in America, its existence is academic. The fact must be grasped at its very plain and literal level: philosophy exists as a specific department of knowledge in a university organized into various specialized faculties, and the result is that the philosopher himself be-

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SINCE its emergence as a "movement" during the postwar years, Existentialism has been denounced as gibberish or all too glibly embraced; WILLIAM BARRETT'S simple and incisive explanation of the fundamental significance of this relatively new tendency in philosophy will prove welcome. Existentialism, Mr. Barrett asserts, is more than a fad: it is an original attempt to confront the human situation, of this time and place, in the deep and serious spirit that marked philosophy in its great classic periods. Mr. Barrett is an associate editor of *Partisan Review*, to which he has frequently contributed. He has also written for *Kenyon Review* and other magazines, as well as for COMMENTARY. Born in New York City, he was educated at City College and Columbia University, and holds a doctorate in philosophy from Columbia. He now teaches at New York University. Much of the substance of Mr. Barrett's essay was delivered as a lecture at the Institute of Religious and Social Studies as part of a series on "The Crisis of Contemporary Civilization."

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comes merely one "professional" savant among many others. Such a social organization of knowledge inevitably buries the ancient sense of philosophy as a concrete way of life, for the exigencies of teaching require a doctrine that can be readily taught to pupils. It takes only a passing glance at some of the key concepts of Existentialism to see that something different is at issue here: the fundamental realities of human life that Existentialism discusses—death, anxiety, anonymity, boredom, choice, freedom, love, guilt, etc., etc.—are not the prevailing concepts in American academic philosophy today. Our philosophers prefer to discuss the concepts that relate to science and logic, knowledge and experiment. The concepts of Existentialism are thought to have merely a literary existence.

This rejection is evidence of how far one particular tradition among the intellectual elite of our society has tended to set knowledge above life. Our technological civilization tends more and more to venerate the expert, and to the degree that the philosopher becomes assimilated to his civilization he strives more and more to justify his own professional existence by a high technical competence in the special problems of logic and philosophical analysis. All this has been necessary, and yet its regrettable result is that a great deal of modern philosophy has tended to become divorced from life. And by the same token, it is only natural that Existentialism, which struggles against this tendency, is looked on askance by a great many American philosophers.

Most Americans connect Existentialism with the current French movement, and particularly with the name of its most brilliant publicist, Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre's is an agile and energetic mind, but his doctrine represents, I believe, a dilution of Existential philosophy, and in any case does not take us back to its original sources. These lie in the 19th century, and the great innovators are Kierkegaard and Nietzsche—though the latter, unlike Kierkegaard, was not fully aware of his Existentialist point of departure. Existential themes are treated in the fiction of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. In this century the two most important Existentialist philosophers have been the German professors, Martin Heidegger and Karl Jaspers, to whose names might be added that of the Spanish philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, who has described his philosophy as one of "vital reason." There are also a significant number of thinkers, such as Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel, who have used Existentialist concepts for explicitly theological purposes.

These names would indicate that Existentialism is not a momentary intellectual fad derived from the French, but a much wider and deeper movement in Western thought, with roots stretching back into the past two centuries. To see what these roots are, it may be more convenient to turn, not to an abstruse text in philosophy, but to a work of literature that takes a simpler and direct grasp of the issues involved. Tolstoy's great story, "The Death of Ivan Ilyich," has by this time become something of a basic scripture for Existentialist thought.

Its plot is slight. Ivan Ilyich is an amiable and undistinguished bourgeois who has spent his whole life trying to be like everyone else in his social class: a successful and happy man for whom happiness means only the absence of suffering. But one day Ivan Ilyich feels a pain in his side which resists all treatment by doctors, and as his illness progresses, he suddenly realizes that he is going to die. For the first time in his life death becomes a reality for him. In the face of this awful presence, all his disguises fall away: confronting death for the first time in his life, he is also confronting himself for the first time. Hitherto in his life he had hid from himself amid the routine mechanisms of all his social, official, and familial functions. Now, as he is about to die, he asks himself the questions: Who am I? What has been the meaning of my life? In the end Ivan Ilyich is content to die because he has discovered that the life he had lived was empty, futile, and meaningless.

What Tolstoy says here, in effect, is that modern life has alienated the individual from

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himself. The materialistic and rationalistic 19th century, with its emphasis upon all the bourgeois routines of life, has so externalized the individual, has so efficiently attached his self to its outward activities, that he has lost the feeling and the passion for his own personal existence; it will take nothing less than the presence of death to restore to modern man this sense of life. Kierkegaard puts it eloquently and compactly:

"Let others complain that times are bad; I complain that they are petty because they lack passion. Men's thoughts are as flimsy as thin ice and men themselves as insignificant as the thin snow that covers it. Their thoughts are too petty to be sinful. A worm might consider such thoughts to be sinful, but not a man created in the image of God. Their pleasures are circumspect and boring; their passions, sleep; these materialistic souls fulfill their duties, but they collect their usury for it; they believe that although our Lord keeps his accounts in good order, they can hand him counterfeit. Out with them! This is why my soul always hearkens back to Shakespeare and the Old Testament. There one feels that those who speak are men; there they hate; there they love; there they kill the enemy, curse their descendants for generations to come, there they sin."

This passage might almost have been written by Nietzsche, who launches his plea from the diametrically opposite anti-Christian pole. Modern man, says Nietzsche, lacks a goal, and his existence is therefore purposeless and nihilistic. Similar themes appear also in such diverse writers as Stendhal and Burckhardt, the Swiss historian.

The 20th century has no reason to forget these complaints. Our technological civilization has become even more involved with elaborate apparatuses to catch and smother the individual. We have gone beyond the 19th century in the development of a fantastic mass culture—in radio, movies, and television—that stamps out all individual differences. Modern society has become more and more a mass society. Cities grow larger, crowds become more potent factors, and the individual is threatened more than ever by anonymity in the mass. The image of modern man lies in T. S. Eliot's line in "Burnt Norton": "Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind." Amid this general purposelessness of life, this mass drifting, we set ourselves the task of recapturing the sense and the meaning of life.

It is clear that when Tolstoy speaks of a loss of the *meaning* of life, he is not referring to a loss of some *rational explanation*. Nor is the meaning that is to be restored a purely intellectual one, some new fact or discovery of the mind. On the contrary, the disorder in modern man that Tolstoy intends is a disorder in the more primitive and irrational, or non-rational, parts of man's being. Existentialism as a philosophy seeks to deal with these irrational parts of our existence in a way that philosophy has never done before, and by so doing gives reason itself a new place in the human hierarchy.

This is why Existential philosophy has been frequently—and, I think, unjustly—criticized as anti-rational. One is not against reason if one insists that the irrational is an inseparable part of life, and that it is precisely with the irrational parts of our being that modern civilization fails to deal adequately. This so-called "anti-rational" tendency in modern philosophy has now had a long history, from Rousseau in the 18th to Bergson, Whitehead, and Heidegger in our century, and it embraces too many great names to be dismissed out of hand. Any future rationalism worth its salt will have to assimilate a great deal from these "anti-rational" thinkers, and we ourselves would be less than rational if we did not make an earnest effort to understand in detail how the irrational enters human life.

As death appears to Ivan Ilyich, it presents itself as something altogether unreasonable and incomprehensible. Immersed in the comfortable structure of his life, he sees this strange and dark intruder creep in to destroy everything. Yes, death is a banal fact, and we know that all men have to die; Ivan Ilyich knows with his head, but his heart cannot grasp the incomprehensible fact that

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he, Ivan Ilyich, should have to die. This bewilderment may strike us as childish, but it is Tolstoy's means of showing us how the irrational, like death, may fall upon us in the most unpredictable way.

KIERKEGAARD has expounded the presence of the irrational in another area of human life—in the act of choice or decision. We do not doubt that some decisions are more rational than others, and we may even speak of a decision as being the only rational choice under the circumstances. But is a rational choice one from which the irrational is ever completely excluded? Is any choice, however rational it be, free from risk and adventure? Of course, there are certain trivial choices that we make every day, and that we may reverse the next day if we are proved wrong. But these are choices that do not commit us deeply, that leave us relatively disengaged from the consequences. As soon, however, as a choice cuts deeply; as soon as it commits our whole life in a certain direction; so soon, then, do immense difficulties appear, the balance of probabilities becomes harder, and each alternative appears, however we may canvass its possibilities, as a leap into the unknown.

The choice that personally involved Kierkegaard happened to be the question whether or not to marry. Engaged to a young woman in Copenhagen, he desired marriage intensely, but he felt in himself also a certain religious mission that would prevent him from giving himself sufficiently to another person. The particular psychological facts involved here are important for an understanding of Kierkegaard's biography, but they should not obscure the fact that the problem of choice that Kierkegaard faced is universal in its essence. There are, in short, choices in life that are irreversible. Kierkegaard could not have made an *experimental* choice of marriage, in the expectation that if it "did not work out" he could return to his religious vocation and its tasks, for the vocation might have been lost through his marriage. On the other hand, if he renounced marriage experimentally, he could not hope to return to the young lady should the other alternative not work out. She might not be there—as in fact she was not—when he returned.

All this points to the fact that the situation of human choice is not at all a situation of scientific experiment. A situation is experimental in science when certain scientific controls have been established so that through these controls we can repeat the experiment at any time and place we choose, and indeed repeat it indefinitely. The more precisely scientific the experiment becomes, the more its features of accidental particularity become refined away, and the easier it becomes to repeat it in all its detail. But our fundamental choices in life do not permit us this degree of control because they do not permit us this degree of detachment. We have to choose here and now, and for the rest of our lives, and the alternative we renounce is lost forever. We could be completely experimental about our own lives only if we were immortal, and so could repeat any situation of choice indefinitely.

Since death is real and our lives finite, every choice is also a renunciation and this is why Kierkegaard speaks of the *pathos* of human choice. It was this sacrificial and pathetic aspect of choice that led Kierkegaard to his great polemic against the excessively rational philosophy of Hegel. The old adage puts the matter quite simply and adequately, "You cannot eat your cake and have it, too"; but Hegel devised a sophisticated dialectic by which it was possible to bring together two conflicting alternatives, thesis and antithesis, into a higher synthesis, so that the speculative philosopher, triumphing over life, could both have his cake and eat it, too. Such a reconciling of opposites is indeed possible in knowledge, where a more inclusive theory may embrace two conflicting alternatives; but it is not possible in life, where the suffering of renunciation cannot be altogether eliminated by reason. This opposition between knowledge and life has been one of the chief themes of Existentialism, as well as of a great deal of modern philosophy and literature.

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THESE two brief illustrations of the irrational—death and human choice—which cannot be altogether expunged from our existence, also illustrate that science, and scientific experiment, cannot take over the whole of life. The fear that science might do so has been a very powerful motive of thought in the West, from William Blake onward. Indeed, from the Enlightenment in the 18th century to the present day, two deeply opposed attitudes toward science have been dominant: along with the great hope in science and its possibilities of human liberation, there has developed a great fear that science would somehow mechanize and impoverish human life. This fear cannot be dismissed simply as a crude popular superstition, for it embraces too many great names of our culture: Blake, Wordsworth, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Bergson. Our task, rather, should be to disengage the philosophical insights that characterize this fear of science at its deepest level.

One of the best expressions of the fear is found in the first part of Dostoevsky's novel, *Notes from Underground.* The hero is afraid of the scientific society of the future in which human life will be rationally controlled and ordered down to the very last detail. When human life becomes so scientifically precise and predictable, nobody will want to live it. Dostoevsky's hero would prefer, out of sheer spite, as he puts it, to smash this machine that would seek to contain him, would prefer to show that his human will in its liberty transcends the mathematically predictable, even if he has to show this in a destructive way. We come back thus to our principal point: what Dostoevsky is saying, through his tormented and oppressed little hero, is that human life must be more than pure reason, and to attempt to reduce it to the latter is to destroy it, even if we make that reduction in the name of universal enlightenment.

It would be a mistake to consider the Underground Man as merely a sick and neurotic individual produced by the stresses of modern society. He is that, of course, but he is also a universal human character. We are all the Underground Man, to some degree. He is that dark side of our being with which we must try to live in peace, and if we take lightly his fulminations against a human regime completely controlled by science and reason, we do so at our own risk.

SINCE he is universal, the Underground Man reappears. Perhaps I may drive home my point by turning to a rather extraordinary remark made in the 1920's by I. A. Richards, the British critic and psychologist. It is a remark that seems to me to express the extreme of hope that science will master life. (In justice to Richards we must, however, point out that at the time he was much more enamored of the possibilities of psychology than he is today.) He remarked: "We can anticipate the time when psychological science will have advanced to the point where we can have, if we choose, whatever minds we desire."

In the perfectly scientific utopia, in short, you could order your personality at a psychological laboratory the way you order a prescription at a druggist's. Select your label, follow the prescription carefully, and you will have the personality, or mind, that you want. Science, which has performed so many miracles in the transformation of matter, and has found synthetic substitutes for almost everything, would here have found at last a substitute for life itself. In this psychological utopia it would be possible for a man to have a certain character without living through the risks, anxieties, and uncertain struggles that make it. We would not have to live to become a certain kind of being; science would provide it ready-made.

We notice that the possibility that once inspired Richards with such sanguine hopes is precisely the possibility against which Dostoevsky's Underground Man rebels. Sick and resentful though he may be, the Underground Man at least insists upon having his own human life rather than some mechanized substitute for it. The science of psychology has gone on developing since Richards' remark, but it is now further from maintaining any such utopian claims as once

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enchanted him. Among some circles in America, psychoanalysis may be regarded as a kind of magic, but not by the analysts themselves. Some people tend to think of psychoanalysis as a process in which the analyst, somewhat like a mechanic, overhauls the patient and gives him a new engine or set of works. But the serious analyst, while hoping to transform the neurotic patient's fundamental orientations toward life, insists that the patient can solve his problems only in actual life and not in the psychoanalytic session. Life has to be lived, there is no substitute for living—not even psychoanalysis.

Existentialist philosophy, in its insistence that the categories of life cannot be reduced to science, carries this point further. It may seem a rather trivial platitude to say that there can be no substitute for living, but the saying may not strike us as so platitudinous when we reflect upon the vast mechanized passivity that our civilization imposes upon so many of its members. In such circumstances the living rediscovery of certain banalities may represent an immense task and an immense triumph. Some of the greatest chapters in the history of philosophy are its discoveries of what lay obvious, but unnoticed, before every man's eyes. We may recall the great saying of Heraclitus, at the very dawn of philosophy in the 6th century BCE: "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar, and he must continuously seek to rediscover it." This saying might serve as a very good motto for Existentialism. Among other things, it may make clear why the modern Existentialist, Heidegger, finds these early pre-Socratic Greeks his real forebears in the effort to confront human life and the whole life of nature with a primitive directness. The ancestry of Existentialist philosophy thus turns out to be very ancient. Philosophy, here, is not the mere putting together of certain abstract propositions into a system; it is rather the concrete effort of the living individual to relate himself to his own life and the life of others around him. Quite literally, philosophy is a task that each individual has to perform for himself.

In this search for the primitive, Existentialism is in line with the most considerable movements in art and literature in this century. The word "primitive" is bound to arouse misunderstandings if it is associated with the life of savages, barbarians, or big-game hunters. Primitivism suggests to some people the beat of tom-toms, Tahiti, maidens in sarongs, Gauguin: in short, an escape from modern civilization into the illusory simplicities of some South Sea island. These forms of primitivism have abounded, but they have always ended in a blind alley because the desire for escape is itself very non-primitive. I am using the word "primitive" in a much more basic—I almost wrote primitive—sense: the primitive is the primary; and the valid search for the primitive is a search for the sources of our being which a too routinized civilization tends to obscure. In this sense, nearly all the art and literature that matter in the past half-century have been primitive.

Modern painting and sculpture, for example, have really succeeded in creating a new kind of vision. In these works we stand in a new and more direct relation to colors, shapes, and forms. It is a vision of things at once simpler and more complex than the Western art of the past. In its distorting simplifications, bold arbitrary forms, it often resembles primitive art, from which indeed it has consciously drawn inspiration in certain cases, though it could not exist without the whole tradition of Western art. Moreover, the artist himself seems to stand in a new and direct relation to the very materials of his art: he seeks naively to assert the presence of his paint, stone, or metal, and his art is no longer a device to conceal or transcend this presence.

In literature, in writers like D. H. Lawrence, James Joyce, and Thomas Mann, we find similar and diverging efforts to deal with the primitive. In his Joseph stories Mann seeks to restore the primitive mythic consciousness to literature. James Joyce, in his last work, uses the most sophisticated literary technique, drawing upon the resources of the whole past of Western litera-

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ture, in order to render the most unconscious, inarticulate, and primitive parts of human experience. Of these writers perhaps Lawrence is the most explicitly programmatic in his search for the primitive simplicities that he believes modern life to have lost. The organic unity of being that Lawrence seeks through sexual experience is something that Existential philosophers have sought in other directions. As T. S. Eliot reminds us, Lawrence was a man with an intense spiritual vocation, and his interest in sex was not at all a message of sex for sex' sake. Nevertheless, his proposed solution to the sickness of modern civilization seems to us today rather one-sided.

Sickness and cure, crisis and rebirth—such considerations bring us to the heart of spiritual drama of our period. One of the most common complaints against Existentialism has been that it has dwelt too much upon the sickness of the time, that it has been a philosophy of despair, negative and nihilistic, and therefore that it has despised the ordinary values of humanity. Such a criticism seems to me to be partly true of a writer like Sartre, whose work often shows a narrow and over-intellectualized concentration upon the morbid aspects of life, but it hardly does justice to that real ferment that works at the center of Existentialist thought. Even if such thought only faced the abyss clearly, it would in our void and violent time be the necessary premise of regeneration. But in some of the Existentialist philosophers one discerns more, much more, than this; and the brief indication above of parallel tendencies in modern art and literature should be enough to show us that this philosophy is not an eccentric movement or a systematization of odd neurotic attitudes, but an effort that lies in the very mainstream of modern culture. And because it is that, now that the first flush of faddism and superficial popularity have passed, we may look upon Existentialist philosophy as something of permanent value to us.

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THE TRANSPLANTATION OF THE YEMENITES

A People in Danger of Becoming a Problem

ONE of the miracles of the new State of Israel was "Operation Magic Carpet," by which forty thousand Yemenite Jews were transported almost overnight by airplane from a primitive physical environment and a static medieval culture into a new world of bustling activity and progress. Unhappily, under the daily glare of reality, the miracle has begun to fade, and increasingly we hear of the "Yemenite problem." The newcomers have become a center of controversy between the government and the religious bloc, and many observers are concerned also over the possibility of their becoming a permanently underprivileged caste in a society that has little knowledge of, or use for, their old traditions, and that can spare little time to appreciate their unique charm and vivacious humanity.

We present here two articles on the Yemenite Jews, aimed at giving a perspective on the "problem" and on the living human beings who are at the center of it. S. D. GOITEIN, professor in the School of Oriental Studies of the Hebrew University, describes the ancient culture which the Yemenites left behind them; CONSTANTINE POULOS discusses the difficulties involved in their reception and re-education in Israel.

DR. GOITEIN, born in Bavaria in 1900 and educated at the universities of Frankfort and Berlin, emigrated to Palestine in 1923. He has published numerous essays and books on Moslem civilization and on problems of Jewish education; an article on "Cross-Currents in Arab National Feeling" appeared in COMMENTARY February 1949. Mr. Poulos has written widely for numerous magazines on subjects related to the Balkan countries, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East; the present article was written after a stay in Israel. Mr. Poulos was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1916.

The Old Life They Led

S. D. GOITEIN

THE Jewish communities of Yemen have ceased to exist. It is not without emotion that I make this statement, for there were so many of them, they were of such long history, and so much had to be left behind.

Recent research conducted by the School of Oriental Studies of the Hebrew University has shown that Jews were scattered throughout the mountains of Yemen in approximately eight hundred localities, many of them purely Jewish, a fact hitherto unknown both to Jewish demography and to the educated Yemenite himself. Urban quarters and villages, many with fields, plantations, and hotly contested water rights; with public and semi-public buildings, largely very primitive, of course, but nevertheless serving their purposes: worship, study, the education of boys, the reception of needy travelers; with age-old cemeteries and saints' tombs—all had to be abandoned. Almost all movable property was lost as well. It was either sold for next to nothing, or buried in cemeteries or caves, whenever it was not taken away from its owners by force. New *genizahs* ("hiding places") have sprung up all over Yemen, containing Torah scrolls, manuscripts, and printed books, as well as some of the precious old silver work which its owners would not sell but dared not take with them, as such possessions might have meant danger of life in the remote and unpacified regions which many of them had to cross on their way to Aden. The well-to-do distributed money in the form of charitable loans to less prosperous members of the community, so as to enable them to meet the exorbitant passage rates imposed on the emigrants. (I was told by some young men that they had made the journey to the coast disguised as Moslems in order to pay only the normal rates.) In their apocalyptic state of mind, the Yemenites saw in this sudden and complete impoverishment a sign of the Hour. One man in whose hands I saw scores of written acknowledgments of such charitable loans concluded his report with the earnest words: "Praise be to God, who makes the rich like the poor."

THE Yemenite Jews represent a type that has largely disappeared from the modern world. Modern man is *homo oeconomicus,*

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striving for a prosperous life for himself and the greatest possible number of others; the Yemenite belongs to the older species of *homo religiosus,* whose main concern is the salvation of his soul and the souls of those for whom he feels responsible. In this respect the Yemenite Jew has close affinities not only with his Moslem environment, but with so-called primitive men all over the world, with believing Christians, and, of course, with that "Polish Jew" whose existence seems to continue only in legend and literature. Beneath certain merely superficial peculiarities, two-thirds of the Yemenite's characteristics are those that up to the beginning of the present century were common to the traditional Jews of Southwest Germany, Hungary, and the whole of Eastern Europe. Other elements of his character are shared by most Jews living in Moslem, and particularly in Arab, countries. The Arabic spoken by the Yemenite Jew is as different from that of the Jews of Baghdad, Aleppo, or Casablanca as French is from Spanish, but the common heritage of medieval Middle Eastern civilization, with its particular brand of Judaism, compels us to think of the Yemenites as a subgroup of Oriental Jewry.

It is misleading, however, to speak of the Yemenites as Arabian Jews. Arabia means to us the dry, barren desert, with its tents and nomads and the camel as the sustainer of human life. Yemen, though it is found in the southwestern corner of the map of Arabia, is largely an alpine country, with altitudes of four to six thousand feet above sea level, watered, like India, by the rich rains of the monsoon. It is a land of intensive agriculture. One sometimes finds four hundred terraces, one above another, on the slope of some gigantic mountain. (An idea of the landscape may be obtained from the *National Geographic Magazine,* November 1947, p. 658.) Architecture, too, is adapted to the terrain: houses extend upward instead of spreading over precious soil, and buildings of six or seven stories are quite common. Even a Jew of limited means is likely to have occupied more rooms in Yemen than well-to-do people do today in Tel Aviv.

Yemen is similar to India in having a sort of caste system, though by no means as rigid as that of India. The Jews constituted the artisan class. As late as 1937, an Arab leader, after visiting Yemen, said, "All arts and crafts are in the hands of the Jews." At that time the statement was an exaggeration, but it was almost true three generations ago, when Yaakov Saphir visited Yemen and wrote that wonderful book *Eben Saphir,* which through an incredible oversight of the Jewish publishing houses has not yet been translated into any European language. It is probable that in the centuries immediately preceding and following the rise of Islam, when the high civilization of old pagan Yemen collapsed and the country was overrun by Bedouins who regarded manual work as degrading, the Jews became restricted more and more to arts and crafts, and to a certain extent also to small shopkeeping.

But the Jews were never completely excluded from agriculture. In this respect also, research being conducted at present among the immigrants has completely changed the state of our knowledge. A very great percentage of Yemenite Jews possessed land; the majority lived in separate villages, often older than the adjoining Moslem villages, and could boast of centuries-old rights in wells and irrigation channels. Although emigrating Jews were required to turn in their property deeds, many succeeded in taking them along, providing us with a most interesting source of information. As in old Sabaean times, every field has its proper name; for an intensely agricultural people each piece of land has its individuality. Many Jews leased their land to others on a yearly basis; some cultivated it themselves, or with Moslem farm hands. Many divided their time between field and workshop; only a few made agriculture their main occupation. But even Jews from small urban centers are deeply versed in agricultural matters, partly because many of them used to spend much time in the country as wandering artisans or peddlers, but mainly because the artisan was completely dependent on the well-being of his agricultural clientele. Often the Jewish craftsman was paid, not in cash, but with a specific part of the yearly harvest; thus the Jew observed the progress of the crop with as much anxiety as the Moslem farmer. And the Jews had no difficulty in adapting themselves to agriculture whenever circumstances required; an official of the American Joint Distribution Commit-

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tee told me that many earned the cost of the journey down to Aden by working in the fields.

THE Jews of Yemen practiced almost every handicraft conceivable in an undeveloped society. In the towns the most widespread occupation was that of silversmith. No great amount of clothing is needed in that comparatively warm country, but the wearing of daggers with beautifully decorated sheaths and hilts, or of belts woven of cords of silver or other material, is for Moslem men absolutely *de rigueur*. The women, needless to say, are also great purchasers of ornaments, which in a country like Yemen serves as a form of savings. The Jews were also the tailors, a craft almost entirely restricted to that of embroiderer, for clothes themselves are of a very simple cut: the main work consists of embellishing the women's trousers with variegated and elaborate embroidery. (In Yemen, only women wear trousers; it is said of an effeminate man: "He wears trousers.") Other Jewish crafts were the preparation of furs from the skins of goats and other animals, and weaving. Many Jews were masons; the beautiful traceried window-heads of hard plaster seen on many city dwellings in Yemen were mostly their work. Their carpentry, however, was poor.

In the villages, the most characteristically Jewish craft was that of blacksmith; the Jews made and repaired all the tools needed by the Moslem farmer. Another occupation was the manufacture and repair of leather bags used in the Yemenite method of irrigation. Many Jews were engaged in making earthenware; whole villages, located on favorable soil, specialized in this craft, the women being the producers and the men the distributors—a division of labor often found in primitive society.

Although the proverb has it that "A man with two trades is an impostor," most Yemenite Jews, especially the villagers, practiced various crafts. A blacksmith, for instance, would be prepared to act as a carpenter or to repair broken earthenware. I once asked a Yemenite how many trades he had mastered; without hesitation the man listed twenty-seven of them, including the art of writing amulets for sick cows—an important skill in a cattle-raising country without veterinarians.

Although the Jewish monopoly in arts and crafts was greatly reduced during the past two generations, the Jewish exodus from Yemen must nevertheless have been a serious economic blow to the country. An American expert is reported to have said that such a great loss of skilled labor might seriously hamper plans for the development of the country. Many immigrants told me they had been forced to teach their crafts to Moslems before departing. In some places, craftsmen were even put in irons by the local rulers to make certain that the arrangement was carried out. But, as one of the men concerned said to me, "How can one teach a trade in a few months, when the proverb says, 'An artisan is he who has inherited his art from his fathers, not he who has learnt it in one year'?"

THE key position held by the Yemenite Jews in the country's economy was of great effect in preserving their moral and religious solidarity. "The artisan is a king," goes the saying. No one lived on wages or on public funds. Even tax collectors and rabbis invariably had some additional trade, usually manual; in this respect, as in many others, Jewish life in Yemen bears a close resemblance to that of our forefathers in the Palestine of Talmudic times.

The preservation of traditional Jewish life was fostered also by the high barriers erected between the Jews and the rest of the population by the Yemenite caste system, and to an even greater degree by the Moslem religious law. Almost everywhere Jews lived in separate quarters and villages; only as Jews emigrated or died out did non-Jews take their places, giving some localities the appearance of mixed villages. The Jew was distinguished by his clothing: he wore no turban, no belt, no dagger—except in some remote districts—and his shirt was of a different cut and color. He was also marked by his side-curls, which, according to one Yemenite authority, were not genuinely Jewish, but were imposed on the Jews by a fanatical ruler in the year 1666. Moslem law guaranteed the life and property of non-Moslem subjects, but required of them self-abasement before the ruling religion. The non-Moslem had to pay a degrading poll tax; his house had to be lower than any nearby Moslem building; he was not per-

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mitted to ride, lest he have opportunity to look down upon a Moslem; his testimony against a Moslem in court was almost never exacted; and he was exposed to all sorts of other disabilities and insults. The Jew in particular, according to the accepted interpretation of a well-known passage of the Koran, was destined by Allah to remain destitute "until the Day of Resurrection." Therefore even wealthy Jews used to appear in public as poor people, a habit not wholly given up even in Palestine. Finally, non-Moslems occupied in the Moslem state the place of serfs who could always be forced to do hard and even degrading work for the government or for the local potentate, with little or no payment. The Jewish communities of Yemen continually fought against these impositions, sometimes with success.

It is true that the social segregation of the Jews in Yemen was not so complete as might appear from the above. I have often heard from the immigrants sincere praise for the Moslems' devotion to pure monotheism; and I was astonished to learn that sites for synagogues and Jewish cemeteries, even buildings, were sometimes donated by pious Moslems, particularly in the smaller villages. In such places the majority of the population was illiterate, while virtually every adult Jew was able to read the word of God; on Saturdays the Jews spent almost the entire day in the synagogue in prayer and study, so that the Jewish community was surrounded by an aura of holiness which did not fail to impress its neighbors. I recently heard of a Moslem clairvoyante who reported that she had seen the Jews in Paradise, sitting and studying the sacred books; she was terribly beaten, since the proper place for unbelievers is of course Hell, not Paradise; but she insisted that she had seen rightly, and no doubt her vision expressed the feelings of many. During weddings and other festive occasions, the Moslems might come in and listen to the sweet Hebrew melodies. Jews might also visit and congratulate their neighbors on their high festivals. But, notwithstanding these occasional manifestations of friendship, it is still true that the social life of the Jews was largely confined to their own people.

THIS Jewish community of Yemen was especially interesting in the fact that it exhibited an intense communal life without any clear form of social organization. There was no "congregation" in the Western sense: life centered about the synagogue, but it was not the congregation which built the synagogue; rather, the synagogue created the congregation. Religion did not serve the community, but communal life existed only insofar as religion required it. You need a *minyan* of ten for joint prayer, and a number of persons versed in the Law for joint study; as you are under obligation to pray three times a day and to study every day, you need a synagogue. Further, the ritual bath is of no less religious urgency than the synagogue, and details concerning it will invariably appear in any description of a Yemenite locality. A father may teach his son all that the Law requires of him, including swimming; in some cases this was done, but since it was not generally practicable, most places had a *midrosh* (school) for boys. In many villages, this *midrosh* served as a hospice for needy travelers, fulfilling another great *mitzvah*. (In larger towns, however, the *midrosh* for "guests" was in a separate room or building.) A Yemenite wedding is a very great affair, and some villages found it practicable to have a special building for such festive events (one is reminded of the old Judentanzhaus – the Jews' dance hall – in Rothenburg, Bavaria). High in the north of Yemen, where there were some particularly strict communities, there were communal Passover kitchens, closed down for the rest of the year. In addition, cemeteries had of course to be provided everywhere.

All these needs were met on a purely voluntary basis. A man or family would erect a synagogue, with or without the other buildings needed for religious purposes. They would either retain it as their private property, in which case they would remain "leaders," or declare it *godash*—the Yemenite pronunciation of *kodesh*: "holy," meaning "public"—in which case leadership would rotate according to circumstances. The most popular form of synagogue was an oblong building in which the whole of one of the longer walls, facing north toward Jerusalem, was occupied by the Holy Ark, so that the long rows of praying men would all face the Presence, a very impressive sight. It was furnished with mats, rugs, and cushions; often also with long, low desks for the books. The Yemenites never had a reader's platform

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of either the Sephardic or the Ashkenazic (*almenov*) type, but the reader stood at the *teba* of Talmudic times, a small movable desk of simple construction. Where circumstances required it, a palm or willow tree would be planted near the synagogue to provide some of the materials necessary for the building of booths for Succoth. Sometimes a piece of land with fruit trees or a garden was donated together with the synagogue, for the maintenance of the place—no very expensive matter.

In the Yemenite community there were no religious officials to be paid. There was no Reader, or *chazan,* for everyone was expected to be able to carry out that function. In some synagogues the various parts of the service were auctioned off, as well as the portions of the Torah reading. An educated Yemenite knows more or less the whole Pentateuch by heart, together with the musical notes for each word. A rabbi, called *mori*—"my lord," the same meaning as the word "rabbi" itself—is one who has the reputation of being learned, not a paid official. If he has judicial powers, particularly in matters of civil law, he is called *beth din,* "court of justice"; thus when one hears of some locality that had four "courts of justice," it is to be understood that there were four persons entitled to give religiously valid decisions. The *mori* was not chosen or nominated; he obtained his certificate from another *mori,* and all were free to make use of his services or not. Conversely, a *mori* might declare some day that for personal reasons or religious scruples, he was no longer prepared to act in an official capacity. In general, to "refuse honor" was in Yemen almost as much a matter of principle and etiquette as in China. In accordance with a Talmudic prescription, no man would rise to act as Reader unless repeatedly asked to do so. I was recently astonished at a Yemenite service to hear a "leader" shouting almost angrily at a man sitting in the corner of the synagogue, and urging him to get up and read a portion of the service; the man consented to do so only very slowly, but I learned afterwards that he had bought that *mitzvah* previously for good money. Only in the capital, and one or two of the larger towns, would the rabbi get some sort of remuneration, but this too was done irregularly and with no fixed procedure.

Ritual slaughtering, which in so many parts of the Jewish world has been the backbone of the community's economy, did not serve this purpose in Yemen, with the partial exception of the capital and some larger towns. This was because a considerable part of the community knew the prescriptions of ritual slaughtering as a matter of course, and no specialized group of slaughterers was needed. It is quite common to find a boy of twelve who knows by heart one of the Yemenite manuals of slaughtering or a relevant section of Maimonides' *Code of Jewish Law;* at the time when an Ashkenazi boy becomes Bar Mitzvah (an institution unknown in Yemen), a Yemenite boy may already be a certified *shochet.* Even a woman could act as *shochet;* I know of one who was so learned in this art that she issued certificates to other, male *shochets.* This may seem odd to us, but it is in harmony with Jewish law.

THE structure of Jewish life in Yemen was thus rather amorphous, even anarchic. Even small localities often had two or three synagogues, because of some religious, social, or personal dissensions. A Yemenite boy not long ago described his village to me in these terms: "Twenty adults, two synagogues. Why two synagogues? For quarreling: when they quarrel, each *minyan* prays separately; when they are at peace, they pray one week in one synagogue and one week in the other." A great source of dissension was the rationalistic movement known as *dor de'o,* "Age of Reason," which slowly ripened during the last third of the 19th century and came into full force in the second decade of the present one. As this anti-Cabalist movement demanded changes in the prayer book —although they were slight changes, comparable to the variations between the Hasidim and Mitnagdim of Eastern Europe—local schisms would occur as soon as a sufficient number of persons in a synagogue had been converted to the new persuasion.

The community was not, however, so powerless against its members as might appear at first sight. Strict religious discipline, not difficult to enforce in a country governed by rigorous religious law, gave to public opinion very great power over the individual. A person had only to be temporarily excluded from the religious service to give in very

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soon and make amends. In addition, the small Jewish communities often enjoyed the benefit of genuine leadership. The leader was either the "leader" of the synagogue—that is, the man responsible for its maintenance, who distributed the various "honors" and had the right of the "beginning" (i.e., of starting with a high voice the portion of the service said aloud by the whole congregation)—or the *mori*, or the government-appointed tax collector, or, as was very often the case, all three combined. As is often true in anarchic societies, the Yemenites were prepared to obey when they found a man who was able to command. When I wanted to interrogate the headman of a village in one of the immigration camps, I always tried to speak to him in front of the men of the same village. I often had to marvel at the degree of respect and confidence the man commanded among his people—and that in spite of the changed circumstances. I was reminded, at times, of the description of Job in his happy days: "Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel; after my word they spoke not again, and they waited for me as for the rain. . . . I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as king in the army" (29:21-25).

LIFE as it was led in the Jewish communities of Yemen is irretrievably ended. One cannot start again in the ultra-modern society of Israel where one left off in the wholly medieval state of Yemen. The Yemenite Jews know this very well, and are fully aware of the difficulties awaiting them here, in the economic, social, and spiritual spheres. Still, it is to be hoped that some of the special qualities they brought with them from Yemen—industriousness, dexterity, versatility, frugality, religiosity—will help them to find their way in that country of Israel for which they and their fathers had so intensely longed.

In the New Land

CONSTANTINE POULOS

A SUCCESSION of droughts and the growing exclusion of Jews from urban trades had something to do with the decision of the Yemenite Jews to leave a land where they and their forebears had lived for twenty centuries. Most of the Jews of Yemen were craftsmen and artisans, highly skilled as silversmiths and goldsmiths, but also engaged in carpet-making, weaving, embroidery, and shoemaking. The Jewish craftsmen would barter their wares with villagers and townspeople for food; the years of drought greatly reduced this trade and the Jews suffered much privation. Other factors in the decision were persecution and oppression. But the main reason was religious. When word reached their remote villages that Israel had been reborn, the Yemenite Jews were moved by a Messianic fervor to "return" to the land of the Bible.

Israel lay fifteen hundred miles to the north, and between it and the Yemen there are vast treacherous deserts and unfriendly Arab tribes. So they went south, down out of the hills to the tiny neighboring British Protectorate of Aden. It was not easy. The law still prohibited emigration. The Imam of Yemen was not too anxious to lose all his ablest artisans or to risk the displeasure of his fellow member states of the Arab League. But when he found that he could not combat the tremendous magnetic power that the existence of a Jewish state in Israel had on his Jewish minority, and that many of them were leaving illegally anyway, he relented. The Jews could leave, but they could not take anything with them, except, perhaps, a rug, a blanket, a straw mat, a battered oil lamp, a tin kettle, perhaps a *shofar* or an elegant water pipe.

For some of them the long trek to Aden, over camel caravan routes and donkey tracks, took a harrowing two months; for others, only two weeks. Many died on the way. As it happened, there were also various tribal sheikhs, rulers of desert principalities, along the way to Aden, who had to be paid a toll fee of about six dollars a head. Once in Aden, the emigrants were safe. Representatives of the American Joint Distribution Committee were waiting for them, and they were taken on buses to a special camp near the capital city of Aden. At the camp they were fed, given some clothes and a cursory medical examination. Then, after varying periods of waiting, they were put aboard airplanes.

These people, who had not been permitted to ride horses lest they meet a Moslem on foot, eagerly and expectantly climbed aboard the big planes. Few, if any, had seen aircraft

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before, but it is written that the exiles would return to Israel on the wings of eagles. Small and docile, 145 of them squatted quietly in a plane built to carry 56 passengers. And instead of two weeks or two months, it took only nine hours to reach Israel's Lydda airport. The story is told of one old man who wouldn't get off the plane when it landed because he couldn't believe that he had arrived in Israel.

THE operation of bringing the Yemenite Jews to Israel was colorfully and appropriately labeled "The Magic Carpet." Both the first phase, which took place between December 1948 and March 1949, and the second and larger, which started in July of 1949 and was concluded in September 1950, were handled by the AJDC. It is estimated that the total cost was somewhere around five and a half million dollars. A charter line, the Near East Airlines, handled the extraordinary airlift with five Skymasters and one Tudor, making daily flights back and forth. Three babies were born on the "Magic Carpet" planes.

Leaving the planes, the Jews blinked in confusion, ecstasy, and anticipation. Many old men knelt and kissed the ground. Others kissed the hand of the first Israeli they met. Some feeble old people had to be carried off on the shoulders of their young sons. They huddled together under the protective wings of the planes and looked around at "their" land, the big, modern airport, the spreading plain, and, in the distance, the purple Judean hills.

A bus would take them to the end of their long pilgrimage—one of four camps for Yemenites operated by the Jewish Agency with the cooperation of the Israeli government. After the formalities of registration and medical examination they were assigned to living quarters: families in barracks and wooden huts, single men in tents, and the infants in nurseries.

At first they would keep to themselves, still a little frightened. They didn't ask questions, and if one spoke to them they would keep their heads low and bodies bowed. On the second and third days they would lift their heads and then their eyes. They would point to the neatly laid out neighboring agricultural settlement and ask, "Is that Jewish?" Then to the distant hills, "Is that Jewish?" Reassured again and again, they took on self-confidence. Day by day their high shrill voices became louder and bolder.

YEMENITE Jews have small bodies, dark skin of various hues, long heads, coal-black hair. Their men tend to have scraggly beards and sharp faces, while the faces of the younger women are darkly attractive and warmly expressive. If, as some anthropologists believe, the Palestine of Biblical times was populated by a Jewish people indigenous to its Middle East environment, it is possible that the Yemenite Jews bear a closer resemblance to the ancient Jews than any other modern group.

For centuries the Yemenite Jews were forbidden to wear white or colored garments, except on the Sabbath, and were restricted on weekdays to black and dark blue. There is still a preponderance of drab dark colors in the camps, but here and there a woman has a bit of red or yellow wound around her hair or her neck. Another has a colorful cheap print dress, which she wears over Arab-type tight trousers. The men have their long nightgown dress, common in most Arab countries, or they wear jackets over skirts, but more and more are now wearing ragged ensembles of shorts or trousers and jackets.

Their "return" has brought many problems to hard-pressed Israel. The immediate problem is health. One in three of the newcomers has acute malaria, and one in four has tropical ulcers (deep, wide wounds extending down to the bone). At least 25 per cent require hospitalization. Their diseases include tropical fevers, skin diseases, trachoma, diseases of malnutrition, and a few cases of leprosy. The mortality rate was high but has been reduced by effective treatment.

The effects of chronic malnutrition are sadly visible in the nurseries, where one finds eighteen-month-old babies that weigh only nine pounds, have only two teeth, and legs hardly thicker than a man's thumb. There are three-year-olds and five-year-olds that weigh as little as fourteen pounds.

Many of the children were found to have mysterious black spots on their bellies. The doctors were completely baffled until they learned that the spots were burns that had been lacquered over: in Yemen, sick children were taken to witch doctors who poked hot needles under the skin of the abdomen—one

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prick for one kind of sickness, two or three for others. Some of the children have as many as a dozen such burns on their bodies.

The children are now receiving excellent care at the hands of doctors and experienced nurses, but it took some time for the camp authorities to overcome the stubborn refusal of the mothers and fathers to entrust their children to the nurseries and clinics. Now the mothers come along to help the nurses, nurse the babies, if they can, and learn the fundamentals of baby hygiene and care.

The women are still reluctant, however, to take off their clothes in front of a male doctor, and not one expectant mother has been willing to have her baby delivered in a hospital. Consequently, the nurses must keep a check on the pregnant women and be prepared to help them when the time comes.

Actually, the camps are vast kindergartens for both young and old. At first, forks were issued to the new arrivals, but it was discovered that they didn't know how to use them and a few even hurt themselves. Now only spoons are used for all meals. When bed sheets were issued, the Yemenites cut them up into prayer shawls and skirts. In the beginning, they slept under the beds and cots, for they didn't understand the purpose of a bed. Only when members of the camp staff demonstrated by undressing, climbing on the beds, stretching out, and pretending to sleep, did the dark eyes gleam in understanding. Similarly, the use of toilets, showers, wash basins, chairs, and garbage cans had to be demonstrated. The shower baths were such a novelty that the immigrants would stand under them for hours at a time until the camp authorities established specific periods for their use. Though many of the Yemenite Jews can read the Bible, they are almost all, in practical terms, illiterate.

With infinite patience, the camp staffs try to educate and explain, and to learn at the same time. The first immigrants to arrive were given all the bread they could eat, in big slices. But they didn't touch it. In the big slices, apparently, bread lost its former value, and only when it was cut up in little pieces, and again became "dear," would they eat it. After the experience of eating in the big camp dining halls wore off, most of the immigrants, like camp inmates everywhere, preferred to take their food to their own quarters. This practice aggravated the sanitation and health situation, forcing the camp staff to make periodic checks and to explain and demonstrate, over and over, why and how the living quarters and the dishes and spoons must be kept clean.

Efforts to put some of the abler men to work around the camps have been hampered by the inability of the immigrants to tell the time—indeed, by their total lack of any idea of time. An immigrant told to report at the camp office at seven in the morning shows up around noon, oblivious of the difference and indifferent to its meaning. They are in most ways very cooperative, however, and camp discipline is exceptional. They are extremely appreciative of kindness and can quickly perceive intent, even in a glance; but their appreciation often takes a servile form, to the extent of falling to the ground and kissing the boot of a staff member who has performed some perfunctory act of helpfulness.

The government's aim is to assimilate and integrate these strange newcomers to the best that Israel has to offer—as soon as possible. But it is realized that this will be a difficult and drawn-out process. The differences in values and outlook may, in the long run, prove a more serious problem to the State of Israel than the immediate difficulties of providing housing, clothing, food, and medical care. Nor are the Yemenites, for all their eagerness to fit into the larger community, quite ready to yield up their ways of living entirely to the official, organized standards of modern Israel. A Yemenite butcher, for instance, refusing to accept the jurisdiction of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, hung out a sign saying: "Slaughterer—working under the supervision of the Almighty." After all, he had studied Torah from the same books as the organized rabbis who now attempted to impose their authority over him, and he saw no reason why he had to have permission or pay a fee in order to perform a ritual slaughter. One may be permitted to hope that this butcher will continue to constitute a "problem" to the authorities.

There are plans for the gradual absorption of the Yemenite Jews into the country's economy. Hard and willing workers, they will probably replace the departed Arabs as field workers. Thirty villages of one hundred families each, or three thousand families, will be established in olive-growing areas. In ad-

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dition to tending the olive groves, most of which belonged to Arabs who abandoned them during the late war, the new settlers will have small auxiliary plots for mixed farming.

Seven hundred families have already been housed in "working villages" in Galilee and in the narrow corridor between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The men are working on various public works projects of road construction, afforestation, and land clearance. Another eight hundred families are now being settled in similar working villages, and it is expected that three thousand families will be absorbed in three new towns that are to be established shortly.

Schools have been provided in the camps for the children, and in special youth camps for boys between thirteen and seventeen agricultural training is being given in addition to general education. For the men and women there are courses in vocational training and housekeeping. Even those who were craftsmen and artisans are to be taught modern techniques and new methods.

All of these earnest plans and efforts of the government and the various institutions do not alter the unfortunate fact that the Yemenite Jews will have to live, for a long time, in a kind of vacuum. Eventually, no doubt, they will be absorbed into the larger society, but the process of absorption will be dependent, not only on the solution of the economic difficulties that affect all immigrants, but also on certain social and psychological factors that may in the long run prove more difficult to cope with.

The Westernized Jew stands aghast at the first sight of his primitive brothers and fellow citizens; and his next reaction is to put the disturbing sight out of his mind. When he hears that two Yemenite fathers in the Ein Shemer camp were caught selling their daughters into marriage for seventy dollars each—on the installment plan—he smiles good-naturedly: "They are adaptable," he says patronizingly, and lets it go at that. Or he smugly focuses his thinking on the children and writes off the immigrating generation as expendable. Later, he may pick up and repeat the various clichés of prejudice: the Yemenite Jews are childish to the point of imbecility, shiftless, dirty, unwilling to work.

These attitudes are part of a guilt complex. There was a large Yemenite community (about thirty-five thousand people) in Palestine before Israel was established, and the Westernized Jews are painfully conscious of the fact that very little was done to bring this large group into the mainstream of the larger Jewish community. All sorts of special virtues were attributed to the "exotic" Yemenites, but they "didn't fit," and they were allowed to suffer from various class, cultural, and social discriminations. Unskilled, illiterate, and poor, they were Palestine's social outcasts.

Many of the first Yemenite immigrants to Palestine went to work on the land, hoping to become independent small farmers and even employers of others. As this motivation was in conflict with the predominant collectivist and cooperative tendencies of Zionism, nearly all of the Yemenites soon withdrew from farming. A few managed to achieve white-collar status, and once they had good positions, with regular salaries, they moved away from their own community, anxious to disassociate themselves from their "inferior" origins; in this way, the community was deprived of its most capable members and left politically and intellectually stranded. The majority worked as unskilled laborers for pitiful daily wages. Education was expensive and few opportunities for better employment were afforded them. They naturally fell into the lowest job classifications: porters, janitors, street-sweepers, garbage collectors. After 1933, they were even squeezed out of these jobs, as the influx of immigrants from Europe provided "more acceptable" applicants for service work.

The boom days of the Second World War greatly stimulated the Yemenites' desire to improve their economic status, and many of them, still shut out of respectable business, turned to black marketeering, to various shady dealings of a more or less minor character, and even to petty thuggery. One of the most extensive black markets in meat, broken up some time ago by the police, was centered in Kerem Ha-Temani, a slum section of Tel Aviv inhabited almost exclusively by Yemenites.

The frustration of the Yemenites also expressed itself in more significant ways. It was from among the Yemenites that the un-

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derground terrorist organizations drew much of their support. Terrorism gave the Yemenite a welcome opportunity to strike back at the society which degraded him. The terrorist organizations gave him a sense of belonging, and he carried out the orders of his Westernized leaders with exaggerated bravado and heroism, proving to himself and to the "other Jews" that he was someone to be reckoned with. Irgun Zvai Leumi, the largest of the terrorist groups, was particularly successful in attracting Yemenites, and in the ferment of underground comradeship even the social barrier was broken down and several Western Jews married Yemenites. Prime Minister Ben Gurion, who bitterly hated the IZL, recently said that the only real accomplishment of the terrorist organization was its success in socially integrating Western and Oriental Jews.

Too late did Ben Gurion and the Jewish Agency recall the existence of the Yemenite community in their midst. It had had no wealthy community organization to support its members, as did the European communities, and the Jewish Agency was too preoccupied with other problems to pay much attention to people who lived uncomplainingly on the fringes and in the slums. None of the respectable political factions had seriously attempted to give the Yemenites an active role in political and social life, and belated attempts to draw the Yemenites away from the terrorist organizations failed. It was all too easy for the Yemenites to believe the demagogic charges of their leaders that the Jewish Agency was a pawn of the British Mandatory authorities.

After the establishment of the state, the Yemenites learned that their underground leaders were less concerned with them and their problems than with political rituals and political positions. The grandiose promises of the terrorist leaders were not fulfilled. Disappointment led to withdrawal from the terrorist ranks and to an increase of discontent. Today the old Yemenite community sees itself still isolated, still left out, and its members naturally resent the exceptional care and attention which the new Yemenite immigrants are receiving. And they have not forgotten the lesson of their underground experience: that violence and dissidence are social weapons. Despondent and destitute, they still cling to the idea of asserting themselves through revolutionary means.

IT REMAINS to be seen how seriously the authorities have studied the problems of the old Yemenite community and how seriously they will apply their findings to the problems of the new. In the long run, the problem of the old Yemenites and the new is one problem, and successful integration of the new immigrants must eventually mean integration of the Yemenite community as a whole. And there are a few hopeful aspects to the new problem. The assimilation of the new immigration from Yemen will be handled entirely by Jewish authorities. From the very first day the direction will be provided by sympathetic advisers. Absorption will be carefully planned, and the distribution of new immigrants over the country will be carried out with the conscious intent of preventing segregation. Economic, educational, and cultural aid are all included in the plans.

But whether or not the new Yemenite Jews become a constructive force in the Jewish state depends on the degree of attention paid by the authorities to social as well as economic factors. If there is an attempt to dig out the old roots indiscriminately and to force the new immigrants speedily into the austere, tight compartments of uncompromising Zionist ideology, the result will be maladjustment, hardship, and desperation, and a serious setback to hopes for the eventual creation of a well-balanced society.

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TWO POEMS

CECIL HEMLEY

Porphyry's Journey

It is not enough that the spring returns,
That lilac and daffodil again
Rise from the nothingness of death,
Last year's purple is not upon the bush,
The yellow that delights me only counterfeits
A yellow that is lost. My mind reflects
Lost seasons and lost hours, is not content
With what is similar, would have them back
Pure as the essence it has refined
Out of the tumult of insistent fact. And so
I greet the spring with music not in tune
Completely with the frolic of fresh buds;
I cannot join the chorus of forgetful things,
Choiring bird, gamboling brute,
Praising as though this were the only spring.
My mind becomes a voyager;
I seek a spring beyond the spring.
—Cut in the brickworks of his heart,
Porphyry found a hidden stairs,
Mounted past globes and revolving skies
To reach the secret keystone of the world.
And May was there, unblemished green,
And song was there, such melody
That bathing in that vernal stream
The filth of time fell from his brain;
The ancient rage that pain and joy had
wrought
Was calmed; and younger than the youngest
thing,
He felt his roots take root in spring.
Who would not root himself in such a soil,
In such a climate put out leaves?

Once

Once if a doom-wind shrilly cried,
A witch in the evening haunting my room,
Or the terrible shadows massed on the walls,
Talons extended, saber-teeth bared;
Once if the black night pressed too hard
Against my closed lids and I screamed for fear,
Feeling the menace of death and change,
Though I could not have told what I feared;
The opening door would let in light,
And monsters and shadows would flee as they heard
A soft voice of comfort and witches would reel
Knowing they could not resist the strength
Of the warm-eyed protectress who kept me safe,
Of the brown-haired Titan who ruled the dawn,
Directed the daylight, shuffled the months,
Whom mirrors honored and shade trees adored.

O once if the hanging moon hung awry,
If the splashing waves did not break as they should,
If the sun was hidden or the storm-clouds blurred
The flanks of the hills, it was to her I prayed,
And I watched the magic of her potent smile
Alter the weather, reverse the tides;
I saw the industry of her learned hands
Order the madness and maelstrom of time.

Cecil Hemley's work has appeared in numerous magazines, and a book of his poems will be published in the fall by Noonday Press, New York.

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ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE UNDERWORLD

An Experience in the Santé Prison

ROBERT MISRAHI

The first sign of a knowledge in birth is the desire to die. This life seems unbearable, another inaccessible. One is no longer ashamed of wanting to die; one wishes to be transferred from the cell one detests to a new cell which one will learn to detest.

Franz Kafka (*Diaries*)

WE WERE arrested in a little hotel in the Latin Quarter after the proprietor had phoned the police; one of us was twenty and another twenty-one years old. Three others, seventeen and under, were released the next day.

The night of our arrest, the policemen around the police station took us for youthful gangsters or riotous students. But they soon found out about our political activity and became curious about us. Obviously no one knew anything about the Palestinian business, and they all regarded us as fanatics or playboys. Most of the time we just smiled; we kept up our pride, certain in any case of being in the right; this attitude may have saved us from the hostility of the policemen; perhaps it actually aroused their interest.

We soon began to talk. The policemen, and especially the sergeants, couldn't see why our consciences were so clear. We tried to explain that it was temporarily necessary to break certain laws in order to establish just laws where there were none; but they replied by bringing up "the Jewish problem." A sergeant explained in a tone of solemn indignation that "the Jews stick together," that they exploit the countries in which they settle, that everywhere and always they take the "best places." Someone remarked that the Jews "never work with their hands."

There was an Arab peddler, under arrest for twenty-four hours. From time to time he excitedly gave his opinion: in Algeria the population was exploited by a few Jews who monopolized practically all business; and "the Jews won't cooperate, no, you can't get anything out of them." One of my friends spoke of the "new Jew" of the future, and of the "ideal." Little by little the policemen moved away from our bench, but only after the sergeant remarked that he had good friends who were Jews, but "they were not like the others."

The whole day passed in comings and goings between the police station and the Commissariat, which was situated in a different street. The commissioner and the inspectors were affable and confused; they wished to dispose of our case as quickly as possible and regretted that no one at the Judiciary Police or elsewhere was willing to assume responsibility. They regretted having to meddle in our affairs, they strictly abstained from passing judgment on us, but they were obliged to take cognizance of a simple legal violation and to act accordingly. They respected our "intelligence" and our opinions; as for our aims, they couldn't say. They questioned us politely and expressed the hope that everything would be settled that same day: we would be transferred to the Dépôt (Police Prison) and our case would be up to the deputy prosecutor.

ROBERT MISRAHI, who was a young member of the Stern Group in Paris, was arrested in May 1947 for the illegal possession of arms, and spent several months in Paris's Santé Prison. He here describes his experiences during that stay. Mr. Misrahi was born in Paris in 1926, and is a graduate of the Sorbonne. He became connected with the Stern Group in 1946, and his arrest grew out of a series of secret meetings involving both political activities and instruction in the use of arms. This description of his experiences in the Santé was first published in the French monthly *Les Temps Modernes*. It has been translated from the French by Ralph Manheim. Mr. Misrahi's story "The Badge" appeared in the April 1949 COMMENTARY.

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AT ELEVEN that night we were indeed transferred to the Dépôt. In the police wagon we were mixed in with thugs and vagrants. No one noticed us then or when we were searched at the Dépôt. They treated us exactly like ordinary criminals, that is, with mechanical indifference. We passed a night and a day in a "transient" cell. We told our story, in particular we gathered information about the administrative process and the probable future of each of us. We went unnoticed. About eleven o'clock in the morning we were taken up to be photographed and fingerprinted and to fill out forms.

Bored clerks, prisoners who looked like conventional bandits: three-day beards, clothes in rags, no tie. Some of them, especially two Jewish brothers who spoke Yiddish to us, looked like real thugs. To each other, they spoke French with the accent of the Pigalle toughs. They listened with boredom to our story and quickly moved away from us. In the fingerprinting department the clerk was Jewish. He was astonished to see that on my form I had put down "Jewish" under "race." He looked around and spoke to me in an undertone. Race, he told me, was for the black and yellow races, not for the Jews; he was a Frenchman and so was I. He had been there a long time and what he told me was not a declaration of principle, he was just telling me how to get along, giving me a sound piece of advice. He particularly insisted that it was to my interest to hold my tongue. "When you get to the Santé, don't trust anybody."

That night we reported to the deputy prosecutor. He told us that the facts were clear; and that, without wishing to judge the political significance of our action, he was obliged to hand us over to an examining magistrate. Meanwhile we were to be sent to the Santé.

About nine o'clock we were transferred to the prison in a police wagon. After the formalities of admission I was separated from my friend, who was assigned to the division of minors. Up to our liberation I was to see him again only once, in the examining magistrate's office. So I was alone and naturally I took a certain interest in my new companions. But I remembered the advice of the Jew at the Dépôt. When they shut me up for the night in a little temporary cell, I did my best to find a prudent answer to the classical question: "What you in for?" With my looks I couldn't very well say: "For pimping," or "For burglary." So I only remarked that they had "found some pamphlets."

This aroused interest and a tall chap who must have been just about twenty-five suggested: "Pamphlets? Big Charley?" I gave him a baffled look. "Sure . . . Maurras," he said. I answered vaguely that it wasn't exactly that and besides it didn't matter. The one who had questioned me "was in" for theft. Next I was taken over by a pimp, indifferent to politics, who, when he learned that I was "white" (no prison record), assured me I'd get off with a suspended sentence.

In this temporary cell there was a tall, dried-out man of fifty-five or sixty. A "repeater." He had listened to the conversation I had just had in the prison corridor. He didn't speak to me but I could hear him discussing me with other prisoners. In an undertone he described me as a "political" and seemed very eager to know whether I was Right or Left. . . ."We've got to find out what party. . . the Communists are out to get us." He made himself comfortable on the bench beside me and, in a tone of prison solidarity, asked me if I had room enough. But in the general conversation, he spoke only to the others. That night I hardly spoke.

THE following morning was spent in formalities: showers, examination of belongings, etc. Then we were sent to our regular cells. There was an enormous contrast between the filth, crowding, disrepair, and stench of the places I had seen up till then, and my new cell; when I entered and the door closed behind me, I was struck by the white skins, shaven faces, clean shirts, and general order. Everything had a settled look. I don't wish to describe my impressions, but this is necessary for an understanding of my subsequent attitude, which was inspired by a sudden feeling of confidence. This place gave you a sense of "being at home"; you felt you could "live" here more or less.

Most of the prisoners were young, from twenty-four to thirty; only one was in his

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fifties. When I went in, I sat down on the one bed, surrounded by the six inmates. This was a standard prison scene: a new prisoner enters; he immediately affects the atmosphere; a tissue of habits had been formed, and perhaps he will upset the relations among old inmates and disturb their whole mode of life; his arrival is an event, and the curiosity he arouses is not disinterested. The others are "interested" in him as in someone with whom they will have to live day and night for an indeterminate period. Behind an attitude of mutual helpfulness that is both sincere and affected, both sides try to feel each other out. Without hesitation they gave me soap, towel, food, and even, very circumspectly, razor blades. This last amounted to a great show of confidence. Their friendliness made me forget the Jew at the Dépôt. I vaguely told them my story and listened attentively to their stories.

When they heard I was a Jew, they spoke more and more of the Jewish problem in France. And little by little, with smiles that were both self-satisfied and embarrassed, they revealed the reasons for their arrest. One of them had obviously established his leadership. He used argot rather sparingly and spoke French almost without accent; sitting beside me on the bed, he directed the conversation. He started on the Jewish problem, making an effort to speak objectively, as an intellectual. He wished to show what he thought of the Jews and at the same time to make it clear that he had the necessary qualities for taking the lead in any conversation. He was obviously trying to impress me. I must have mentioned my college degrees* to him, and several times he said that *"apaches* don't have to run around in a cap and scarf, some of them have their degrees." He told me that the Jews stuck together, that they didn't work with their hands, that they exploited any country in which they could entrench themselves. "Let the Jews have Palestine. Good. But then, not a single Yid in France." The speaker was a professional burglar.

"I admit, I have no love for them, but I'm not the only one. . . . Jean" (he pointed out a big fellow of twenty-four or twenty-five, blond and handsome) "is here on account of the Jews. . . ."

"On account of the Jews?"

"Yes, I swiped some furniture off a Jew. . . . He beat it during the war, I needed money . . . . Now he's in America, he sent some kike woman to put the law on me."

It was now lunchtime; they pooled their provisions and shared them. They gave me a portion equal to the others, saying that in prison there was no such thing as a Jew or an Aryan.

"You don't know Hans?"

"Hans?"

A big brawny individual looked at me with a smile. He was a German prisoner who had escaped from a camp and had been caught. All his cellmates were indignant that a prisoner of war should be treated like this. I was told that he didn't like Jews either. Now it was time for our siesta.

The man of fifty who was there for black-marketing sugar arranged to be next to me. Secretly, he passed me a slip of paper on which he had written: "Don't take it to heart. Be careful."

Toward the end of the day, I became acquainted with the Arab. His name was Marcel, he was from Algiers, but he spoke French without an accent. He was in for stealing. He spoke cordially like the others, and like them he made no bones about his opinions: in North Africa you'd only need to arm the Arabs and they'd "settle the hash" of all the Jews; an understanding between Jews and Arabs was impossible.

The evening and night were uneventful. The next day I learned that the "big shot"—the unofficial leader of the group—was a Breton autonomist and dying for De Gaulle to take power. He felt that it was only a question of weeks, of days perhaps. The whole prison was in a state of excitement. In the corridors and through the windows, everyone was talking civil war and *coup d'état.* Bob (the Breton autonomist) said he knew the General's muscle men, and told me if I was smart I'd leave France as soon as possible. "The Yids and the Communists, you know. . . ."

* Friends of mine who were neither Jews nor anti-Semites have reproached me for being arrogant in the first two cells and cowardly in the third. Perhaps they are right. But who is to blame? Whatever he does, a Jew, in the presence of others, will always be cowardly or arrogant.

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That night in the dark the conversation turned to civil war, the next war, the Jewish and Communist peril. The sugar broker said nothing but all the others denounced the Judeo-Bolshevik menace, suggesting radical methods of combating it. The conversation dragged on and on. The "big shot" explained his principles and boasted that in the next war he would not only be able to keep out of danger but would manage to "feather his nest nicely." It must have been about 1:30 AM. I was exasperated both by what they were saying and by the noise. Several times I asked them to lower their voices a little, but I took no part in the conversation. They didn't answer but just made a little more noise. Finally Jean (the one who had stolen the furniture) shouted at me: "—— you!"

By his tone he advised me to make myself inconspicuous. The conversation doubled in intensity. Stubbornly, I protested once more very loudly, remarking that the reasons for their behavior were only too clear. At this moment the guard came by on his rounds, turned on the light from outside, and looked through the peephole. There was complete silence. Then the guard turned out the light, and the sound of his steps died away in the corridor.

I suddenly realized that they would take me for a stool pigeon, and perhaps I had raised my voice on purpose. They kept on discussing until morning without the slightest pause.

After "coffee" we began to pile up the blankets and mattresses. I didn't say a word and they didn't address me. I sat down at the table to write my letters.

At this moment Bob took Hans into a corner, whispered something, then looked over toward me: "Didn't you say you wanted to get him, Hans?"

The German came up to me, told me to defend myself, and knocked me out with two or three punches. The difference in our weight, size, and strength made it impossible for me to react. It all happened pretty quickly, but I had time to hear the German saying: "Dirty Jew, dirty Jew." At that moment I bumped into Jean and he told me not to touch him. The sugar broker said that was enough, but the Arab answered that there was no need of having fine sentiments about characters like me.

It was Bob who gave Hans the order to stop. I regained consciousness a few minutes later, sitting on a mattress.

They spoke of me in the third person and acted as if I wasn't there. Bob climbed up to the window and—falling back into argot—told the story to the next cell.

"We fed the guy, we loaned him everything we had, we did everything for him. We tried to get along with him, but with them, it don't matter what you do. A kike is always a kike."

From that day on I had only my blanket stretched out on the bare floor, in a corner, and my mess gear, "the Jew's mess gear." Sometimes the sugar broker gave me a look of sympathy. The next day Bob notified me that they were going to give me pen and ink to write a request for transfer to another cell. For several days I lived among them without speaking or being spoken to; every second morning we separated for a ten-minute "promenade" (in a large uncovered cell in the courtyard). Then I mingled with the inmates of the other cells, but I didn't speak.

One day, however, Bob beckoned me over to him and showed a page in a book he was reading: the passage dealt with the moral "nobility" and its distinctions of rank. "You see, it's what I was saying the other day. . . ."

All the contempt he exhibited toward me did not prevent him from wanting to prove to me, when the occasion permitted, that he was capable of criticizing and discussing an idea, of appreciating a book, of adopting a point of view. Sometimes he would silently pace the cell, with an air of absorption: "Leave me be, sometimes a man needs to reflect, to meditate."

One morning I was informed that I was being transferred to another cell. Bob told me that he could communicate with any cell he wished and that I'd better keep my mouth shut about the newspapers, razor blades, etc.

The door of the new cell closed behind me. I tried to evade questions. But I had an identification paper, showing the charge against me and my change of cell. I had no need to show it to them right away, but it was possible that they might see it accidentally. Besides, I had to post

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my name on the door for visits, letters, packages, etc. So little by little I explained that I was a Jew, that my former cellmates, who were anti-Semites, had taken me, or pretended to, for a stool pigeon, and had beaten me.

One of them, Paul, turned to me with a smile in which there was both embarrassment and self-assurance. He had been found guilty of armed assault; I soon learned (when he spoke of the absolution for his sins that God would not fail to grant him) that he was a Catholic; he was reading at the moment *Le juif errant est arrivé* ("The Wandering Jew Has Arrived"), for "documentation," he said. When he learned that I was a student, he made it clear that he had almost been graduated from secondary school but had been thwarted by circumstances. René (pimp, burglar, guilty of impersonating a policeman, barkeeper at Belleville) said that he "didn't give a ——," there were neither Jews nor Aryans, it was only the "mentality" that counted. Paul, the leader of the group, was more explicit:

"Take me, for instance, I don't like the Jews. But I think it's disgusting to hit a guy who can't defend himself, and especially to get a Boche to do the job."

The others remained more or less silent, listening with curiosity as I told them what I could about the reasons for my arrest. René asked me where it all got me.

On another occasion he told me how he had robbed a wealthy Jewish tailor, not because he was a Jew, but because "they've always got more than other people." At the same time a young automobile thief told us how clever he had been during the occupation: he would approach Jews who wished to pass the demarcation line and promise to escort them to Tours by train and from there take them on in a car; he would collect half his fee in advance and then disappear.

One morning when we returned from the "promenade," René told us that my former cellmates had spoken of me. He took a protective attitude.

"I asked them what you had done. They couldn't say a thing, so it's all right, I told them to mind their own business. . . . Did you have to tell them you were a Jew?"

Though I tried to avoid political discussions they became more and more frequent, and stupidly I told my companions more or less what I thought. They were all Gaullists except one receiver of stolen goods, a kind of neurasthenic who had spent eight years in an asylum and never spoke about anything but his ruined life and suicide. They were all anti-Communists; with passion and gusto they described in detail the only methods that would create order in Palestine or later in a Gaullist France. Paul, the "big shot," who didn't consider me "like the others," said:

"The Jews and the Communists, we'll cook them all; you'd better pack up and leave if De Gaulle takes power."

That was also the opinion of Jacques; he had enlisted in the Corps d'Afrique, had joined Giraud and then De Gaulle. He had fought up to the campaign of Alsace and had been in the army of occupation. Demobilized, and unwilling to sweat for Renault, he had specialized in burglarizing stores. He was a "patriot," as Paul said, and the two of them got along very well. The pimp reproached him for his devotion to France and De Gaulle: a member of the underworld ought to steer clear of all society, including France. "We're like the Jews," he said. "We're outside the law and we stick together."

I spent my days reading and working, sitting on a pallet at the only table. I studied Hegel and worked on a story in which I attempted to describe my relations with my former cellmates. The others kept asking me what I was writing and what Hegel "talked about." Of course I refused to explain my story, and as for the German author, I tried to tell them what philosophy was. They listened, made me keep on talking, then concluded: "That's all bunk."

One day the next cell lent me the works of Racine. The book lay around without anyone touching it, then I began to reread *Phèdre* and jot down a few verses. The automobile thief (twenty-eight years old, very youthful looking, and lively) asked me to "explain" Racine to him and reminded me that they were all perfectly capable of understanding anything I said. Not knowing whether he was sincere or wanted to make a fool of me, I hesitated and finally said nothing.

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"You're a phony student; if you can't talk about Racine, you're no good, you're no more a student than I am."

Next day the book disappeared.

Some time afterward, the pimp asked me about love. He didn't smile and seemed interested. We chatted for about an hour, then: "Hell, you bore me. Love is to —— and then go pick up the dough. You don't need philosophy to tell you that."

"That's one point of view. . . ."

"Oh no, my friend. You always think you're smarter than everybody else, you think some things are just reserved for you."

Gradually the situation became clearer.

Sometimes René took letters for me that he had his lawyer mail; he began to intimate to me that I mustn't abuse this privilege, that the lawyer incurred risks, and that besides he couldn't serve everybody. Since each prisoner was allowed only a limited number of letters, I tried to write in the name of the neurasthenic, who didn't use his turn; they let me write my letter, but when it came time to deposit it in the window, Jacques said to me: "I've got to write too, it's urgent, my letter is all ready."

He had force on his side. I withdrew my letter. Three days later, I tried again to send a letter by the same system. Jacques let me write the letter, then he said: "I've got to write, it's urgent."

In the morning I had seen him slip a letter to René who was expecting his lawyer. Moreover, he had written the day before in his own name; I called this to his attention. He answered that he had no need to discuss the matter with me.

THAT night the conversation turned to the "right guys," who "lay down the law in prison," and the others, "the intruders here in stir where we're at home." René had started the discussion. The others agreed warmly. Then René tried to use the faucet and found it stuck.

"That doesn't surprise me," he cried. I had been the last to use it.

Before we went to sleep, he made various other pointed remarks. Several days before, he had remarked to me that I deserved to be beaten for some of the things I said. He wanted an argument and I gave him one; it was brief and violent (but neither that night nor on the following days did anyone strike me). I thought I was dealing only with René.

The next morning no one spoke to me. Thereafter, we exchanged only a few words about our collective tasks (cleaning the cell, etc.); finally, one day when the silence had been even heavier and I had not received the letters I was expecting, I refused my share of René's package. He made it clear to the others that they had to choose between him and me: from that time on, they strictly carried out orders, and I was ostracized completely.

The day after that in the corridor, one of the inmates of my cell (a sailor sentenced for theft) came up to me, took me by the shoulder, and quickly whispered:

"They have a putrid mentality; they're putting you in quarantine. I'll do you any little favors I can, like getting you matches or stamps. Try to lay low, don't say anything and be patient."

From then on I had nothing to do with the others. We merely lived side by side in the same cell. I continued to study Hegel and I finished my story (poor, I must admit, but it was the only way I could use my time). In any case, I worked all day and managed perfectly well without the others. Then something new happened.

ONE day Paul, the "big shot," began very ostentatiously to read Racine; this was the book that had vanished while I was reading it. Jacques took to drawing pictures of women to decorate the cell, something he had never done before. Another started writing verses to familiar tunes. Joe, the neurasthenic, remembered some poetry he had written in the asylum. But the silence between them and me remained unbroken. The others pretended to be unaware of my existence or of anything I did. I took my turn at work along with the others, cleaning the cell and piling up blankets and pallets. René often told the story of the Arab newcomer who had been made to sleep on the bare floor next to the toilet, and to clean the cell every day; or sometimes it was the story of a consumptive who had been refused a pallet or extra blankets. I was obliged to feel that I was privileged, since after all I slept on a pallet, beside Joe, and I was allowed to hang up my clothes on a nail. (These material details had their im-

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portance, since they characterized the relations among inmates.)

One morning when I came back from a conference with my lawyer, I found everything changed. My books, papers, underwear, clothes, were all piled up on the floor in a corner. My cellmates were silent and seemed to be expecting something. They didn't look at me. I lost countenance a little and was unable to keep silence; I asked if anything new had happened.

"No, everything's the same."

I began to put my papers in order: my notes on Hegel and the manuscript of my story had disappeared.

"You didn't run across some loose papers? They may have got lost. . . ."

"Kind of a rough draft?"

"Yes."

"We used it to burn the bedbugs. . . . We began to read it, but we didn't read the whole thing. Anything you say about the other cell is our business too."

"But—"

"I don't want any discussion with you. You better ask to be moved again. That's my advice to you. Meanwhile stay in your corner and take care what you write."

(I must add that my story was entirely about Jews and anti-Semites.)

It was not René who spoke; he took an air of indifference, as if he wanted to keep out of things; Paul, the "big shot," didn't say anything either, but just "supervised." Jacques was the spokesman; the neurasthenic was the same as ever, lying silent and absent on his pallet. The sailor didn't take his eyes off me, and his face seemed more somber and flushed than usual. He didn't say anything either.

Next day at exercise, Joe, the "madman," came up to me.

"Before you came, it was me. I was the 'nut.' They never let me alone all day, I was their toy. When you're gone, it'll be somebody else. Don't take it to heart. . . ."

Some days passed. I was no longer able to use the table and the pallets, so I spread out a blanket in the door niche; there were two little windows opposite and it was here that I had the most light. But only the doorway remained free, the rest of the space was occupied by their clothes. When they had to go out for their packages or to see their lawyers, some of them trampled my blanket like a doormat, the others stepped over it. I regarded this as a kind of test: Joe and the sailor stepped over it, so did René; the others trampled.

They didn't speak of me any more. But among themselves they spoke a good deal about Yids and kikes. Paul said to me one day:

"This business of yours is dragging out. If the underlings don't want to move you, better apply to the director. That's my advice to you, something might happen to you."

There had been no incident. It was just my presence.

I HAD my lawyer hurry things up and soon I was transferred to another cell.

The first time I had stayed in the same building and division; this time the assistant director had personally attended to my transfer, and had sent me to another division, situated in a different wing of the building. Thinking I was far away from my old cell, I decided to cover up.

First I tried to pass for a plain arms smuggler. After all, wasn't I in with the "common prisoners" and not the "politicals"? My story was that "I needed money to finish my studies." My new cellmates were: a Russian dope addict, a former czarist officer; an employee of the P.T.T. (Post, Telegraph, Telephone), crook, former sailor, captain in the Resistance (of this he informed us only much later, when there were only three of us left in the cell); a young pimp of twenty-two who attacked old ladies in their villas; a deserter who had previously fought with the Resistance in the Vercors. Finally, a cabinetmaker sentenced to eighteen months for performing an abortion.

The Russian Vladimir, the postal employee Henri, the pimp "Milo," soon noticed that I was not what I claimed to be. For some time our life went along quite normally, except that every day they tried to find out more about me. There was my name, and after a while they found out about my transfers. To account for my Oriental-sounding name, I told them I was Spanish, of Arab origin.

"You must be a Yid," said Milo, the pimp.

The Russian soon came to the same conclusion. When I received mail, Vladimir asked me if "her" name was Esther or

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Rachel. I clung to my Hispano-Arab origin; this gave Henri (the resister) the idea that I had fought in Spain (whether for Franco or the Republic he never let on), and he tried to start political discussions.

As for my transfers, I intimated that they had been due to the advances of some pederasts. I got this idea from the various stories about fairies that Henri (who had been a sailor) and the pimp had told. Emile the cabinetmaker rose to my defense and described how he would have reacted under the same circumstances. Milo began to make jokes about my girlish eyes and slender waist. Often he said to me:

"You're cute, you know."

He playfully examined me from every side, propositioning me, but not seriously. Then one day when I was taking a shower:

"Didn't I tell you you were a Yid? What are you afraid of?"

Henri agreed: "The Boches aren't here any more, there are no more anti-Semites, why do you hide it? Anyway, if you ever have any trouble, I'm here. . . ."

One day this same Henri, with whom I got along best, decided that since I was circumcised, there must be some connection between me and a news item he had read about some students being arrested in the Latin Quarter. He tried to reconstruct the story, telling me that if I was the one he thought, he was glad to know me, that I was right in doing what I did, etc. (I didn't know at the time that he had been in the Resistance.)

The Russian and the deserter (an Alsatian) began to make disparaging remarks about students in general, or, on the contrary, to point out the difference between an authentic student and myself. Vladimir started conversations on learned subjects, loudly but courteously expressing his surprise at the gaps in my knowledge. For instance, when I didn't know the date at which the prison of La Santé was built, he would say:

"What, Monsieur Jacques, you don't know? For a *licencié* that's not very impressive. I had thought better of you."

"All their knowledge is hot air," said Marcel, the Alsatian. "I had students with me in the Vercors, they had a lot of ideas about strategy. They have all sorts of suggestions, but when it comes to putting them into practice, it's a joke. Zero. Anything practical is just too much for you. Take those guys, you had to laugh; they never stopped blowing off, but when it came to getting them out on patrol, you had to drag them."

On other occasions the Russian steered the conversation toward the situation in Palestine. He would say: "You must know a lot about that problem, Monsieur Jacques. A *licencié*. . . ."

I had made up my mind not to understand what he was driving at, but I was obliged to say a few words about the problem so as not to seem to be avoiding it. Then Henri noticed that in speaking of the Jews, I let slip "we" instead of "they." My denials were in vain. Vladimir said nothing, but gloated.

One day he spoke of Marxism and even more of Marx.

"He was a dangerous character. Like all philosophers. You must have noticed that all revolutions have been provoked by them. A healthy state should prohibit the teaching and practice of philosophy, and that goes for you, Monsieur Jacques; you're harmful to society, and prison doesn't do you any harm. I have a great deal of sympathy for you, but philosophers are a dangerous race."

"I'd send them to the mines, I would," said Marcel. "Prison is nothing, it's the mines those students need. I'd teach them. They'd learn how to march in step. . . ."

ONE day Marcel asked me to lend him my Bible. He was a Catholic and had never read it. He asked me who had written the Old Testament. (None of the Catholics I met in prison knew.) I didn't answer, but the Russian smiled.

"It's for cultural reasons that you read the Bible, isn't it, Monsieur Jacques? You're not a believer?"

For some time I lived a normal prison life, spending my time studying and discussing. I was prudent in my relations with Marcel and Vladimir.

One day, Emile went to the Palace of Justice for his trial. When he came back that evening, we all expressed our indignation at his sentence. Then he told me, very curtly, that M., whom he had met in a cell at the Palace of Justice, sent me his regards. I didn't go into the matter, because he was very downcast. But I suspected something

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out of the ordinary, since there was no reason why M. should be called to the examining magistrate, unless I were too.

The next day Emile had regained his usual spirits, and was already joking about his eighteen months: "We'll make it, M'sieur le Président." I tried to find out more about M. Everyone else was listening, but that didn't matter, the cabinetmaker would have spoken to them in my absence.

The truth of the matter was that Emile had not met M., but one of my former cellmates, who had spoken of a little dark-haired fellow, a Jew, etc., and Emile had recognized me; it was clear that he had heard more than he would say. Just then Henri remembered that M. was one of the names he had read in the paper. So I was the person he had thought.

The Russian stood up and said ironically:

"You are a very interesting case, Monsieur Jacques. Didn't I tell you you were dangerous? But I'm delighted to know you just the same."

He was obviously proud at having "known all along" who I was. (The next day he spoke to me at length of certain Jewish sects in the Caucasus, who didn't believe in the Talmud but only in the Torah.)

"I told you he was a Yid," said Milo. "You were mistaken, you know," he turned to me, "my brother-in-law's a Jew. You've nothing to be afraid of."

"That's right, kid" (Henri was thirty-two). "I suspected something all along, but I still don't see why you didn't tell us right away. There are no anti-Semites here."

Marcel had left us and said nothing. Emile seemed rather annoyed at having inspired all these declarations of sympathy.

"I didn't mean to say anything, you've got a right to hide anything you like, but you're the one who asked the questions. And anyway, I don't see why. . . ."

Now I had to keep them from being offended at my distrust. (Why, what did you take us for? Barbarians?)

I explained to them vaguely that I had been made suspicious in spite of myself, that I hadn't known them at first, but that now I saw I had nothing to fear from them, and that in any case, I begged them to keep the matter to themselves and not to say anything to the other cells in the division. I particularly harped on the confidence that I placed in them. Thus I hoped they would make it a point of honor to "keep the secret," and that in spite of themselves they would feel bound by a certain obligation in their future conduct toward me.

Night fell. We were all standing in the middle of the cell, they all encouraged me, made promises, etc.

THE next day Vladimir began to talk about Jewish politicians; he told me that my future was assured, that I had maneuvered well, that he felt sure I had no financial worries. All of them, except perhaps Henri, agreed.

Marcel often spoke in the same tone: "What worries can a man have at twenty-two? They make me laugh, kids talking about worries. All you students are either sissies or liars."

Very politely, Vladimir told me why the Jews were both dangerous and contemptible. No manual work, always the best jobs, plenty of money . . . and that revolutionary spirit which explained why all the disorder in the world had been created by Jews. "Imprisonment, you know. . . ."

"I'd send all of them to the mines," said Marcel.

From that day on Vladimir and Marcel began more and more to criticize and disparage everything I did.

Then Vladimir's term was finished and he left. One night Emile got very excited and told us that "well, I don't believe" those stories about concentration camps, crematoriums, millions of corpses. People had seen a few documentary films, heard a few stories, things that can be made up, after all. He didn't know a single deportee who hadn't come back, and they didn't look like skeletons at all. As for the Jews, they all returned, and got back their jobs, and not the worst jobs by any means. . . . Marcel said nothing. Henri only said there were a lot of people who denied that there had been any Resistance, or any camps, or that anybody had been killed.

The next day, Emile was transferred to the division of *"appelés."*

Marcel now began to find fault with my gestures, my disorder, and everything I said. ("You're intelligent, but sometimes you talk such ——.") If I didn't put away the chessmen, he would throw them and the board

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across the cell, though it was perfectly plain that others were going to play after me.

"Good God, when will you get it through your head that you're not all alone here? You treat us like your servants."

Or he would say that if I received permission to have books, it was because I licked the boots of the director, the assistant director, or the examining magistrate, that I was quite a hand at getting along, and that all in all this was not surprising.

Then Milo, who had something else to answer for at Grenoble, left. Marcel was glad ("but not for him").

There were just three of us left: Henri, Marcel, and myself. It was then that they told about their military exploits, and that Henri confided to us what he had done during the occupation, explaining his silence by saying: "There are some people who may not understand everything." Up to the end I got along perfectly with him.

One day a new prisoner came in, twenty-two, Polish, a professional burglar. He spoke French with a Parisian accent, and a few mistakes in syntax such as children make. It was plain that he couldn't understand Marcel's open hostility toward me. One day he remarked that he didn't like Jews ("They exploit people in Poland"), and Marcel started a kind of blackmail that only I could understand. I now turned my previous precautions to good account, and spoke to him in veiled terms of the confidence I had put in him, etc. He flew into a violent rage and scoffed at my way of putting things. ("Oh, I'm betraying Monsieur's confidence, am I?") Nevertheless, he never told Jean, the Pole, that I was a Jew. Jean and I remained perfect friends.

Then an Arab arrived: twenty-four, a laborer, arrested by mistake in a raid, speaking hardly any French. We got along very well. When Marcel found out that the Arab didn't like Jews ("A dirty race, the Jews") he made no attempt to blackmail me. He merely remarked once that one of my lawyers was a Jew.

During my last days I was especially cautious. Relations between Marcel and me became more and more strained, and I did everything I could to avoid an explosion. I did everything I could to keep Jean and Ahmed on my side.

One Friday my lawyer came and told me that the examining magistrate, who had just come back from his vacation, was prepared to parole me provided the Court had no objection. On Sunday he came back and told me that it was now only a matter of days, because the Court was raising no difficulties.

On my return I told my cellmates, expressing my confidence that the judge would do as he had said. (He knew my case, he knew me; when he had wanted to hold me, he had told me so; now that he said he was going to set me free, he would surely do it, etc.) I must admit that I displayed my joy and sense of deliverance a little too freely. Marcel reacted violently. What enraged him was that I should be so sure of myself; he knew this judge perfectly well, and no one could ever be sure what he was going to do; he had promised to parole a man and then weeks later had turned him down; why should I, Mr. Nobody, think I was any different from the others, why should I expect him to do me special favors? It was only because I was so stinking arrogant that I could be sure they'd let me out in the course of the week, etc. . . . For a week he exulted, riding me more every day and getting more overbearing as the week passed.

"I'd like you to stay here so it'll be a lesson to you. We'll talk about it again in a month or two. You're just like everybody else, my friend. . . ."

A week passed in this atmosphere. Saturday, at five o'clock, I was summoned to the lawyers' room where I heard that I was being released that evening.

On my return to the cell, I said nothing and went on with the game of chess I had started with Henri. (Even if I had work to do, I couldn't decline to play without offending him.) At about eight, a guard came to get me. Ahmed, Jean, and Henri were sincerely glad for me; Henri only reproached me for not having told him. Marcel had the same pleasure as at Milo's departure ("but not for him"); Jean remarked that the week wasn't over yet and I was leaving. In the doorway, I felt the impatience of the guard standing motionless behind me. I hurriedly took out my pack of cigarettes and held it out to the one who happened to be nearest. It was Marcel. He recoiled, and it was Jean who took the cigarettes.

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WHAT NEXT IN EXPLOSIVE IRAN?

Extending the Anglo-American Alliance to the Near East

G. F. HUDSON

IN JANUARY 1944, just after the Teheran Conference, President Roosevelt recorded his impressions of Iran in a memorandum to Cordell Hull that ran in part as follows:

"Iran is definitely a very, very backward nation. It consists really of a series of tribes, and 99 per cent of the population is in effect in bondage to the other 1 per cent. The 99 per cent do not own their land and cannot keep their own production or convert it into money or property.

"I was rather thrilled with the idea of using Iran as an example of what we could do by an unselfish American policy. We could not take on a more difficult nation than Iran."

President Roosevelt was undoubtedly right in describing Iran as both extremely backward and extremely difficult to help. Since 1944 Iran has made no appreciable progress in altering the conditions which he described. But the Iranian government has now, in the spring and summer of 1951, added a serious complication to the troubles of the world by "nationalizing" a great foreign-owned oil industry. The irony of the situation—which might be a cause for mirth if the implications were not so grim—is that this measure of expropriation has been adopted, not by a revolutionary government of Marxists, but by one of the most thoroughly "feudal" regimes surviving in the contemporary world.

Paradoxical as it may appear, however, there is a definite logic in this development, which has taken place as part of the revolutionary process initiated by the Communists in Asia. There are two main forces moving Asia today—peasant land-hunger and anti-Western nationalism. The Communists can exploit both of these politically, but a regime based primarily on a land-owning class can maneuver only with the second. Indeed the only real chance such a regime has of keeping power and gaining strong popular support, in the absence of a serious effort to solve the agrarian problem, is to outbid or forestall the Communists in making dramatic moves against the "imperialist" foreigner. It does not matter whether it is a question of gaining national independence from a colonial power, of abolishing "unequal treaties" such as those which formerly provided for extra-territoriality and leased territories in China, or simply of expropriating enterprises owned and operated by foreigners for the economic development of natural resources; the national fervor aroused is always the same, and anyone who stands in its way, from whatever motives of policy, is liable to be denounced as a traitor to his country.

As the ruling group in an Asian feudal society feels itself being undermined by the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist agitation of Communists, it moves more and more in the direction of anti-foreign action, striving to take the lead in the growing popular nationalist movement. Thus Communist influence leads indirectly to policies on the part of conservative anti-Communist groups that help Communism on the world scale insofar as they harm the Western world—yet are at the

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IT IS barely possible to keep up with the kaleidoscopic sweep of events in Persia; but it is possible to understand the underlying factors in Iranian economics and politics which have in recent months transformed what was apparently a placid counry of the Middle East into one of the most volatile. G. F. HUDSON, a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford University, and a regular contributor to the London *Economist,* describes this background situation that has erupted to threaten Western Europe's most important source of oil. Mr. Hudson's article "Needed: A Pacific Pact" appeared in the April issue of COMMENTARY.

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same time locally embarrassing for the Communists in that their thunder is stolen from them by their rivals.

If it could be assumed that the Mossadeghs of Asia could permanently consolidate their position against Soviet domination by means of such acts as the expropriation of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, there would indeed be some consolation for Britain, America, and other Western nations that may be affected. The free world could then feel that acquiescence in such unilateral measures, however unpleasant, would contribute to the containment of Communism, and it might count such losses in the general category of the sacrifices needed for rearmament. There cannot, however, be any reassurance of this kind, for the reason that there is no prospect that a reactionary regime in a backward Asian country will be able to stabilize itself for any length of time by seizures of foreign capital assets in its territory. The course taken by Prime Minister Mossadegh, though in no way consciously pro-Communist or pro-Russian, can only lead Iran rapidly towards Communism unless some satisfactory compromise between Iran and Britain can be worked out in good time.

THE crux of the situation is that the urge to seize foreign properties is strongest and least inhibited in precisely those countries which are least able to find men capable of operating them. These are the countries where conditions are most feudal, where there is virtually no native middle class, and where almost all economic enterprises requiring large capital investment and managerial skill are foreign-owned. In such a situation there is a most painful contrast between the general poverty of the people and the high standards of living of the foreign managers and technicians employed in oil fields, mines, or plantations; and it is in the interest of the landlords and officials, who are the only other wealthy people in the country, to divert the discontent of the masses from themselves to the foreigner. Up to a point, anti-foreign agitation is not incompatible with a conciliatory and realistic policy on the part of the ruling authorities in their practical relations with concession-holding foreign nations, for the men at the top usually have some knowledge of the world and are aware of their inability to do without foreign capital. But with the increase of nationalist pressure, the sober and cautious spirits are eliminated; they are assassinated, like General Razmara, or intimidated by threats of a like fate, and replaced by men who have no conception of the difficulties involved in the "nationalization" of foreign enterprises. To the ordinary Iranian, from the humblest peasant and herdsman up to the Majlis deputy, the operation of a complex large-scale modern industry presents no problems at all. The oil is in the Iranian earth by the will of Allah; by the will of Allah it rises to the surface in curiously shaped towers which do not look difficult to construct; all that remains is to sell it abroad at a high price so that all Iranians, and especially the Majlis politicians, may live on it in the comfort and prosperity which, but for the fraud and rapacity of foreigners, they would already be enjoying. All that needs to be done is to pass an act of legislation transferring the automatically accruing profits of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company from British to Iranian pockets.

The situation in Iran and other Eastern countries on a similar economic level is quite different from that which confronts foreign capital in a country such as India, which has a relatively strong indigenous bourgeoisie and modern industries of its own. In India, indeed, the factors of agrarian unrest and anti-Western nationalism are present, as elsewhere in Asia, but the existence of an efficient civil service and an experienced class of businessmen provides a solid basis for cooperation between Indian and foreign enterprise, whether private or governmental. British firms long established in India have in many cases transformed themselves into successful British-Indian partnerships because there is on the British side confidence in Indian business ability and on the Indian side an understanding of the functions which foreign capital can perform. But in Burma and Indonesia, the Arab countries and Iran, there

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are no comparable conditions, and it is difficult to find any middle path between a system which leaves the management of large-scale enterprises fully in foreign hands and an expropriation which delivers it into the hands of ignorant amateurs.

The irony of the "nationalization" enacted by the feudal oligarchy of the Iranian Majlis is accentuated by the fact that its victim is the British Labor government, which has not only the responsibility of protecting British property rights abroad (which, even when they are only private, are all items in Britain's precarious balance of trade), but is itself the majority shareholder in the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. It is certainly embarrassing for a Labor government, after having nationalized coal, gas, electricity, railways, and steel as measures of domestic policy, to have to take up a position of indignant protest at the nationalization of its own assets in another country—however good may be its case in international law on the basis of definite treaty rights. But British Conservatives can take no pleasure in the Labor government's predicament, for they are only too well aware of the heavy loss to the nation which would result from confiscation of the vast capital sunk in the Iranian oil fields and the probably consequent need to make up oil supplies with dollar purchases. Yet the damage which the British national economy would suffer by the total loss of Iranian oil investments and supplies is a small thing compared with the crisis in world affairs which would soon follow from the failure of the Iranian government to operate the oil fields at a profit.

IF THERE is no compromise whereby Iranian "face" can be saved without substantially altering the present management of the oil industry, the Iranians have two alternatives in trying to run it themselves. They can bring in non-British Western oil experts, who would probably be American, to help them, or they can bring in Russians. Neither course is likely to be satisfactory from an Iranian point of view. It would be an extremely reckless capitalist corporation that would accept a contract to operate a concession which had just been confiscated in breach of contract from another corporation, and a few individual technicians working under Iranian management would almost certainly not be able to keep the extraction, refining, and marketing of the oil up to the present standards of business and technical efficiency. It is most improbable that Iran could obtain from the West, after expropriating the Anglo-Iranian, enough assistance to maintain the profits of the enterprise, or indeed to keep it solvent.

On the other hand, Mossadegh and his supporters will be most reluctant to turn to Russia for aid. Four years ago Iran refused to grant oil concessions demanded by Russia in the northern provinces, with the excuse that it was national policy not to grant any new oil concessions to anyone; the expropriation of the Anglo-Iranian is now defended on the ground that, if all oil resources are nationalized, no nation can have a grievance on account of discrimination. The Iranian rulers have a fairly good idea of the way Russian technical staffs in Iran would be used, even if Russia consented to provide them without making intolerable conditions, and their aim is to keep out the Russians as well as to drive out the British. But if the expropriation of the Anglo-Iranian does not bring in the golden harvest which the Iranian people have been led to expect, there will inevitably be intensive propaganda by the Iranian Communists (known in Iran as the Tudeh party) for using the services which the Leader of Progressive Mankind would be so ready to provide for a genuine People's Government. Mossadegh (or a successor of similar origin) would then either have to bring in Russians in the desperate hope of saving himself by a pro-Russian policy or would be faced with growing anarchy in the country and finally a Tudeh insurrection.

The fact underlying the present situation is that the Iranian state is, in any case, on the verge of bankruptcy. The fiscal condition of Iran is very similar to that of which American diplomats and advisers had such bitter experience in Kuomintang China and which the Bell Report revealed in the Philippines.

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Reckless expenditure without corresponding revenue; the resort to open or concealed inflation; under-assessment or evasion of direct taxation by the wealthy classes through bribery and political influence; a confusion of state accounts which the most expert auditor cannot disentangle; and a complete inability to enforce economic controls through an inefficient and corrupt administration—these are commonplaces of governmental finance in backward countries. Unfortunately, they are usually accompanied by a refusal, in the name of national independence and sovereignty, to consent to any strings being attached to foreign loans or economic assistance. Iran has been trying to get a loan from the World Bank but has been unwilling to accept the bank's conditions, and so long as international lending is to be anything more than the provision of subsidies for spendthrifts, such conditions cannot be renounced. The landlord-politicians of the Iranian Majlis—the parliamentary body which is in fact a close oligarchy of wealthy families—prefer to stave off national insolvency by seizing a foreign-owned industry which has been up to now an attractive going concern. But if they cannot maintain its efficiency, not only will they fail to obtain the profits for which they hope but they will soon also lose the oil royalties which the company already pays into the Iranian treasury; then the fiscal crisis will be made worse. And when the Iranian government can no longer pay its officials, army, and police, the state administration will crumble, and the way to power will be open for the waiting Communists.

THE whole structure of the Iranian state is, indeed, so rickety that what gives cause for surprise is not that Iran is menaced by Communism, but that it has not already succumbed. How is it that Iran still holds out, while China, with a regime which was no more oppressive or corrupt, has collapsed? The answer lies partly in the circumstances of the last war. In China, as in various parts of Europe, foreign conquest shattered the existing administration and a popular war of resistance against the invader gave the Communists their chance; Iran, on the other hand, though subjected to a temporary occupation by Allied forces, was not fought over or made a theater of guerrilla warfare; thus she emerged more or less unscathed. Iran was, however, the scene of the first great postwar international crisis, for Russia failed to withdraw her troops within the pledged time limit and used them to protect a pro-Russian separatist movement in the northwestern province of Azerbaijan. Under strong American and British pressure, they at length withdrew, apparently in the belief that their puppets in Azerbaijan had been made strong enough to take care of themselves and that the Iranian central government would not dare to challenge Russia by trying to recover the province by force. But that was just what Iran did, and the strength of anti-Russian feeling in the country at that time showed how deeply Iranian nationalism had been aroused by the Russian action.

The Kremlin had indeed revived in full the distrust of Russia almost instinctive in Iranians as a result of more than two centuries of Russian invasions and encroachments on Iran's northern borders, and this habitual suspicion has always been a very powerful factor against the progress of Communism, even though social conditions so strongly tend to promote it. Moscow appears to have learnt something from the fiasco of 1946, and for the last four years has refrained from violence and threats against Iran, confining itself to a steady stream of radio propaganda from Baku, and to underground intrigues aiming to divert Iranian nationalism from an anti-Russian to an anti-British direction. Russia failed after the war to get the oil concession she demanded, but was thereby left the freer to incite the Iranians against the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

If the Iranian Communists succeed in capturing power within the next few months, the event will create a situation in the Middle East as grave as that which the Communist conquest of China created in the Far East. Iran is only a part of the oil-bearing region which also includes Iraq and eastern Arabia; this region as a whole

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is today the most important oil area in the world, and its control would be of vital strategic significance in the event of another world war. The stake in Iran is British, and in Iraq predominantly British, but American oil interests are now established in Arabia on the southern side of the Persian Gulf and have recently opened up a new oil field in Iraq. Private enterprise in the oil business is naturally competitive, but in view of the immense political issues involved, the British and American governments can no longer afford to take the view that Middle East oil is simply an affair of private capital in which diplomacy should confine itself to giving the customary support to national economic interests. It is essential to have a well-planned over-all policy for the whole region agreed on between Washington and London, so that joint action can be taken if and when political crises arise.

It is true that the present time is hardly propitious for such coordination of policies, for the differences between America and Britain over Far Eastern affairs have produced an atmosphere of resentment and recrimination in America which make it difficult to move towards closer American support for the British position in the Middle East. But the urgent need in Anglo-American relations is not to allocate blame for what has happened over the last few months, but to learn from unpleasant experience the lesson that disaster threatens the free world if Britain and America cannot work together in Asia as they do in Europe.

To speak of the Middle East today is to think of oil, but it must not be forgotten that at the western and eastern extremities of the region there are already two latent wars which have nothing to do with oil, but offer Russia unparalleled opportunities of mischief-making. To the west, in the littoral of the Mediterranean, the Arab League remains unreconciled to the existence of Israel, while to the east, India and Pakistan continue deadlocked over Kashmir, and Pakistan is threatened in the rear by the irredentist ambitions of the Afghans. Between the Aegean and the Himalayas, Turkey alone stands solid and single-minded, putting first things first; elsewhere, the countries which the West would like to support and strengthen are engaged either in mutual conflicts and feuds or in anti-Western agitation. Russian power looms in the background ready to strike swiftly from its bases in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and there is far less non-Communist power available regionally to counter the blow than there was when Communist aggression broke loose in Korea last June. The drift of events is toward catastrophe. But the deterioration can still be checked if America and Britain make clear to the world their common interest in access to the oil resources of the Middle East and their determination to oppose jointly, by force if necessary, any Russian conquest of the area.

Meanwhile, the immediate problem is how to meet the emotional aspirations of Iranian nationalism without destroying the efficiency of the Iranian oil industry. It is necessary that all concerned in Western capital investment in Asia should realize fully how strong are the feelings aroused in the masses by the propaganda for nationalization. The idea that a nation's principal natural resources are owned and exploited by foreigners is even more galling to national pride and self-esteem (and the Iranians, with three thousand years of high civilization behind them, are an exceptionally proud people) than it is stimulating to covetousness and envy. Unfortunately, most Western businessmen in the East have been slow to appreciate the situation which confronts them as a result of the awakening of nationalism over the last three decades, and an out-of-date Bourbon attitude towards the new forces stirring in Asia still survives, particularly in the Middle East. The shocks to Western self-confidence and prestige in the Far East from Japanese conquest and Chinese revolutions have broken down the traditional complacency of the "old China hands" and their like to such an extent that—in Britain, at least—they have often become advocates of extreme policies of conciliation and appeasement, especially towards the new regime in China. In Iran, on the contrary,

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there has been so little fundamental change since the early years of the century that there has been a tendency among foreign residents to assume that nothing is ever really going to happen there.

THE Anglo-Iranian Company certainly appears to have been taken by surprise by recent events, and it is arguable that if its directors had been prepared at an earlier date to modify their legal rights in Iran's favor, both as regards financial terms and some form of nominal Iranian partnership in the enterprise, the present situation would never have arisen. The Anglo-Iranian has the reputation of being a good employer, and its workers have certainly enjoyed better conditions than prevail in Iran's own industries, but the British oil magnates have had little thought for Iranian popular feeling, and the British government's participation as a shareholder, far from broadening the company's outlook, seems to have had the effect of imparting to it a bureaucratic rigidity.

The only hope of a satisfactory settlement, and even though the initial negotiations have been stalemated at the time of this writing, lies in convincing the Iranian leaders that continued British cooperation will be to their country's economic advantage, while providing them with sufficiently substantial gains, both in national honor and cash, to enable them to resist the extremist violence which will inevitably be brought to bear against any kind of compromise. The British case in international law is an impregnable one, but it would be folly to rely on mere legality unsupported by force against revolutionary movements such as are now stirring Asia; but to use force would be to risk large-scale military complications under the most unfavorable political conditions. If so excellent a moral case as that of the United Nations in Korea has failed to obtain the unanimous support and agreement of the non-Communist world, a war to preserve an oil concession for a particular nation in a "semi-colonial" Asian country would be the worst possible case on which any major conflict with Communism could be risked. It is essential, therefore, to negotiate with the patience of one who is prepared to hold out for a bargain, but without bluster or threats.

EVEN, however, if some arrangement is obtainable, there will remain in Iran, as in several other countries, the problem of sustaining against Communism an inefficient and socially oppressive regime. Even if the Iranian government manages both to score a political success and increase its revenue by its handling of the oil dispute, it cannot acquire permanent stability except by permanent reforms. It is desirable that somehow external economic aid should be used as a lever for promoting essential reforms; aid without reforms may even make conditions worse, for it enables reactionary rulers to resist internal demands for change to which they might otherwise have to submit.

On the other hand, any strings formally attached to economic aid which involve interference in a country's internal affairs are an affront to national sovereignty. The only way out of this dilemma is by a technique of diplomacy which discreetly impresses on leading politicians the gist of an argument which might thus be summarized: "We want to help you because it is to our interest that your country should be strong and stable. But if you go on governing in the way you do now, it will not be worth our while to help you; it will be better for us to write you off now rather than to pour money into your country while you remain so incompetent and unpopular that you will be unable to resist the Communists anyhow. If you don't improve, we shall have to leave you to sink or swim as best you can—and without us you will certainly sink." If such considerations are politely and persuasively presented—without press conferences or publicity—there is good reason to hope that they will not be without influence.

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THE BIBLICAL MYTH AND THE WRITER OF TODAY

The Ever Recurring Pattern

JACOB SLOAN

FRANZ KAFKA has left a fragment of a story, which I here paraphrase: Amalia and Hans, the butcher's two children, were playing marble near an old warehouse when a man peered out through one of the dirty windowpanes and invited them to come in, with the promise of wonderful sights. Hans was reluctant; he was not sure that Father knew this man; but Amalia was curious to see the inside of the warehouse, which they had never really noticed before. First leading, then pushing Hans, she forced her brother to the low, galvanized door, which they had to get down on all fours to enter. But Hans was still hesitant; he asked the stranger whether he knew Father, and was dissatisfied with his reply. For the stranger first said he did not, but then described the butcher in detail. As Hans explained to Amalia, he was afraid because the man hissed, even when he was silent. Suddenly the stranger reached out and pulled Hans into the warehouse through the small aperture. Kicking and struggling, Hans cried out to Amalia to call Father. "But Mali, completely disconcerted by the stranger's rude onslaught—and with some feeling of guilt besides, for to a certain extent she had provoked the offense, though in the final analysis also quite curious, as she had been from the very beginning—did not run away but held on to Hans's feet and let—." Here the fragment breaks off.

MARTIN GREENBERG, the translator of the second volume of Kafka's *Diaries*, in which the fragment occurs, has pointed out that this is Kafka's Garden of Eden story. Kafka noted that he had been reading the Bible ("Only the Old Testament knows," he remarks cryptically); suddenly this story sprang forth, possessing, like the rest of Kafka's work, the quality of automatic, inspired, yet completely logical and direct writing. It is unmistakably Kafka: the doubting, driven hero; the instinctual, disappointing heroine; the ambiguous stranger; the end, inconclusive, necessary; the very fact that the fragment does not seem intended to end, there being no clear meaning, only a statement stronger than any single meaning that could be imposed on it, even by the author.

Once it has been called to one's attention, there is no doubt that this is a retelling of the story of the Garden of Eden. Adam is there, and Eve, and the villainous, strange serpent that hisses even when silent and whose domain one enters by crawling, and God whom the serpent knows and does not know and who would disapprove. But, more important than this point-by-point correspondence, Kafka himself is there, in one brutal image—the son of a father who is a butcher. For Kafka read the Bible, as he read everything, the way his ancestors—true Orientals and medievalists—read: obliquely, for his own purposes. He was looking for what concerned him; when, as in this myth, he caught a glimpse of the image he sought, that of his own father, he did not hesitate to develop the impression of the myth into an expression of personal art.

WHAT enrichment can the Jewish writer draw from his tradition? JACOB SLOAN, a writer who has felt this problem to be a central one in his own work, suggests here the difficulties—and the possible rewards—of an effort to reestablish oneself in a living relation to Jewish myth. Mr. Sloan, a member of the editorial staff of the *American Jewish Year Book*, has published a volume of poetry, *Generation of Journey*, and has been a frequent contributor to this magazine. He is a graduate of Brooklyn College and the Seminary College of Jewish Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary. He is at present working on a novel.

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I do not mean that Kafka was reconstructing the Biblical myth—he was not an archeologist, or a psychologist, or a historian; he was not even using the myth as a springboard for his own metaphysics. The myth simply *reminded* him of the structure of his reality, recalled him to himself.

THIS, it seems to me, is what the myths offered by Jewish tradition have done in the past. And this is what Jewish tradition can do now again.

But why turn to Jewish tradition rather than to Christian, Roman, Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Greek, etc.? Not for the sake of any preconceived ideological program, but simply because a people's personality is rooted in its history and experience; if we are to be aware of ourselves, we must be aware of our past selves. Such a Jewish myth as the Fall of Man in Eden, seen as Kafka saw it, can be a way to that self-discovery. Not, I repeat, an analytical, critical, programmatic way—for the myth is not to be manipulated. The myth must be caught whole, imagined, for it is a work of fancy; like fancy it "never is at home." The fullest, strongest reaction to myth is a work of art.

How was this done in the past? Milton and Dante, and their wrestling with the myth of Christianity, are familiar; the Jewish commentaries, legends, and proverbs less so. The common modern reaction to the commentaries on the Bible is that they are irrelevant. A popular example is the gloss on the simple narrative statement that Abraham arose in the morning. This is taken by the commentator to mean "Abraham prayed." Why? Because Abraham was undoubtedly a pious Jew—and what is the first thing a pious Jew does in the morning? He prays. Q.E.D. We laugh; this is *a priori* ratiocination reduced to its logical absurdity. But obviously the commentator was not interested in logic; the open meaning of the Biblical phrase did not matter to him; he was intent on the closed meaning—that is to say, the meaning that awaited his statement. In this case that meaning was a characterization of ideal piety.

Thus, the ancient commentators did not engage in the "higher" criticism—serious textual, historical analysis—not merely because they regarded the accepted text as divinely inspired, but also because they *felt* it as myth, as the autobiography of their past selves, and their relationship with myth, though not familiar, was not obsequious either. Their "commentaries" were explorations, into themselves, their history, their fate. Their nearest modern parallel is Thomas Mann, whose Joseph follows a modern destiny, one that Mann knows to be his own; that of the artist, magnetized between the poles of spirit and power. Sholem Asch's Jesus, on the other hand, is merely made to serve a contemporary apologetic purpose: Jesus becomes the saintly Jew *par excellence*, in the Hillel-Gamaliel tradition. The first is art, the second fiction.

"MYTH," says the philosopher Susanne K. Langer, ". . . is a story of the birth, passion, and defeat by death which is man's common fate. Its ultimate end is serious envisagement of . . . fundamental truth; moral orientation." And that is why artists in our day have turned desperately to a search for myth. It is because myth presents, however metaphorically, a "world-picture" that is necessary for the life of the imagination.

Not that myth passed completely out of art when it was overwhelmed by the popular culture that succeeded the French and industrial revolutions. Myth remained in art, but unfortunately in a bastardized form, as a sort of mechanical tool. Mythological images ("rosy-fingered Aurora") became depleted of their specific reference. The result was that art and myth fell together into the disrepute of irrelevance.

Thus the modern artist, lacking meaningful traditional symbols broad enough to encompass both inner and outer experience, misses the bridges which an accepted myth had once thrown up for him—bridges between art and morality, between society and religion. Modern poets such as T. S. Eliot and Hart Crane have sought to construct a

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new myth, to present a new "world-picture." But though they recognized the necessity of going outside their time and working within a tradition of culture, they were constrained to remain in the present by the absence of universal symbols relevant to both past and present. Thus, Crane reverted for his symbols to American folklore and Eliot to medieval theology. But modern society has proved too complex to be expressed in its folklore: nor will it submit readily to the jurisdiction of the City of God. The result is that all such attempts to create a new mythology have succeeded only in creating a sentimental past and a fictitious present.

A good image for the unhappy situation of the artist who is unable to fuse past and present in one world-picture, and to place himself within it, is found in the poetic play *him*, by E. E. Cummings. The poet stares into the mirror but can explore no further than his own image on its reflecting surface. But he is also able to look through the glass as through a window, and then he has a vision of his counterpart in the world outside his room: he sees a spellbinder orating brilliant *non sequiturs*—a man who has no relation to the poet imprisoned on this side of the glass.

It is to myth that we must look to be, once again, both window and mirror in one. It must be looked at and looked through. Looking at the myth, we shall see for the first time the "form and pressure" of our age; looking through the myth, we shall see once again the pre-history of our age. But, best of all, looking at and through the myth as window and mirror in one, seeing a fused image, we shall see ourselves and our world as one.

But how does one go about reacting spontaneously to mythology? There is an elementary and patent danger that confronts us when we approach a myth directly: that of falling into the pit of a literal-minded naivety. Our task becomes one of referring to Jewish myth without identifying with it completely. In the fragment from Kafka's diary which I cited above, Kafka did not accept the myth of the Tree of Knowledge as the basis for a valid theory of knowledge. He neither accepted nor rejected it for this purpose. He was an artist interested in the human nuances of reality. And certainly the Jewish Bible anthropomorphized "relationships"—imagine God working like a man for six days to create the world, then taking the seventh off to rest in! But deliberate if unconscious humanity is the trademark of mythology, of all its "meanings."

The human and imaginative character of the myth may be obvious. The literal-minded naivety of which I have spoken is perhaps a pitfall we are only in slight danger of falling into when we approach Jewish mythology afresh. But there is another danger imminent—the straits of dogma, perhaps the hardest passage for us to maneuver if we are successfully to steer into the open waters of our mythology.

Dogma is so perilous for us not because we are attracted but because we are repelled by it. We who are in the Jewish tradition have become indifferent to those visions of our myth which the strenuous dogma of Orthodoxy and the genteel dogma of Reform alike conjure up for us. We have been too long implicated together with our myth in easy custom and ritual. So it is all the more difficult for us to involve ourselves anew with the myth on the difficult level of imagination. For us the Egyptian episode has been turned into the feast of Passover. The shadow of the Haggadah's definition embraces us ("In every generation we must regard ourselves as being slaves to the Egyptians, and the Holy One, blessed be He, redeems us from their hands"). In terms of larger sentiments, almost of sensibility, our myth is for us inseparable from the religious culture with which we live on partly friendly, partly rebellious terms. Our myth is back in the ghetto we have fled, and the synagogue we prefer not to visit, and a country we admire but do not live in.

The possibility of our *personal* involvement in our myth is rendered more difficult by our very real *social* involvement in the resi-

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dues of myth. Ritual can become an obstacle. Kierkegaard was free to address the sacrifice of Isaac on "thou" terms; but our ceremony of the Redemption of the First-born precludes such intimacy for us. By paying inert money rather than a mortal ram to a priest-substitute for God, we redeem our first-born, as Abraham redeemed Isaac. But we have substituted a transaction for an experience, and introduced an intermediary between ourselves and the myth. We have innumerable intercessors of this sort in the form of rabbis, ritual slaughterers, cantors, circumcisers, etc. Our view of our myth is crowded with institutions and codes.

Then again, those who faced our myth in the past faced it on terms of equal and mutual relevance; they knew they were in the line that extended from their ancestors to themselves, and that the line was significant. Maimonides (Moses the son of Maimon) could be compared to Moses—"From Moses to Moses none has arisen like Moses"—because his *Guide for the Perplexed* pointed to the path of Moses. Even figures so late as the Vilna Gaon and the Baal Shem Tov in the 18th century are recognizable as belonging in a historical continuity, though the one was a rationalist, the other a mystic. But in the last century and a half we have come to wonder whether we wish to be included within that frame of Judaism. Judaism, paraphrasing Kurt Lewin, is not our faith but our fate. This acceptance of a history, even the recognition that the Jew has played a role and represents a mythical symbol in the world, offers only an incomplete relation with the myth. The area of our potential contact, we feel, is too narrow. An area staked out under such necessity, and so deliberately, is too cramped for the exercise of art.

But even in the midst of the social overinvolvement with the Jewish myth (the institutions, codes, ritual), insights of the highest order have emerged. Here is a Yiddish joke to illustrate the ability of the popular mind to penetrate through to the core of myth:

A *rebbe* is teaching a child the portion in the Bible describing how God sent manna to the children of Israel in the wilderness. "And the manna tasted like *tsapichit bidvash.*" *Dvash* means honey—but the meaning of *tsapichit* is still a subject of philological research. The child, in translating this verse, halts and asks the *rebbe,* "*Rebbe,* what does *tsapichit* mean?"

"Oh," replies the *rebbe,* "that's easily explained." And he goes back to the story of the exodus from Egypt and recounts the clamor of the children of Israel in the desert for the fleshpots of Egypt, and Moses' subsequent appeal to God. "So the Holy One, blessed be He, sent manna from heaven to the children of Israel in the desert, and the manna tasted like *tsapichit bidvash. Dvash* means honey, honey is sweet, as you know. Like *tsapichit bidvash* means that the manna was very sweet. Do you understand now?"

But the child is still puzzled. "But *rebbe,* what is *tsapichit?*" The *rebbe* patiently undertakes to clear up this slight misunderstanding. "You are a clever child, aren't you? And you remember the whole story, don't you? How Jacob had twelve children, and he loved Joseph the youngest above all the rest. And Joseph's brethren were envious of his coat of many colors, and they sold Joseph to the Midianites. But Joseph became the chief steward in the land of Egypt and brought his father and brothers and their family to the land of Goshen. But there arose a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph, who oppressed the children of Israel, until Moses arose." And the *rebbe* continues on through the plagues, and the miracle at the Red Sea, till he reaches the verse in question. "And so the Holy One, blessed be He, who is our Father in heaven, sent the children of Israel manna. The midrash tells us that every one who ate the manna tasted his favorite delicacy in it. It was like *tsapichit bidvash.* Think of your favorite dish—well, it was just as delicious as that! For *dvash* is sweet honey, and *tsapichit bidvash* is very, very sweet. You are a clever child—you understand now, don't you?"

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But the child is still curious. "But what is *tsapichit, rebbe?*" So the *rebbe* girds his loins and goes back still further, to the story of Abraham. Yet the child still does not understand what *tsapichit* means. Desperately the *rebbe* returns to the story of Creation. To no avail. By now the *rebbe* is losing his temper, the child is on the verge of tears. "But *rebbe,*" he cries, "what is *tsapichit?*"

The *rebbe* bursts into a rage. "Idiot! Ignoramus! Heretic! I can't go back past Creation, can I? Translate on!"

THIS is a joke about human fallibility, of course. But it touches many other serious matters. One is that science, in its search for causation, evades the immediate fact—*tsapichit.* The story is most relevant, however, because it could be, and was, composed in the presence of a religious code based on a religious myth that governed every action of the storyteller's life. It may be viewed as an attack upon that code, or mockery of the dogma behind the code—but it is not a mockery of myth itself.

It is, in its way, a protest against the literalist handling of the myth. It says in effect that the myth does not have to be coherent and perfect and rational; it can be incomplete—the exact meaning of *tsapichit* does not matter. Both the *rebbe* and the child are right: the child for refusing to be satisfied by rationalizations, the *rebbe* for really refusing to explain the miraculous in terms other than itself, the entire myth.

Similarly, the weight of past interpretations of the Jewish myth need not be an intolerable burden on us, for the reason that our tradition itself is various. This multiplicity of meaning offers the broadest and richest mine-face for the explorations of art. It is exhilarating for an artist to read the Talmudic *Ethics of the Fathers* and come across differing statements about the tradition itself, standing side by side. "Where there is no Torah there is no livelihood, where there is no livelihood there is no Torah." But—"He who accepts upon himself the yoke of the Torah is free of the yoke of government and the yoke of livelihood." There is really no need for us to reconcile the tradition with itself, or to subject ourselves to any of its images. Our need is rather to compare the tradition with ourselves; this is best accomplished by reflecting aspects of myth in the mirror of our art.

HERE is a midrash that seems to me both to do this work of reflection and to give us an opportunity for further reflection of our own.

The daughter of the pious well-digger fell into the well he had dug for the benefit of the pilgrims to Jerusalem. The rabbi who was sought out for help expressed the faith that the pious man's daughter would not suffer through the very means of her father's philanthropy. And in fact Elijah did rescue her.

But the midrash does not end at this happy point. There is a postscript, a comment by a contemporary, as it were, on the meaning of the miracle. "Rabbi Aha said: 'Nevertheless, the well-digger's son died of thirst.'" Obviously, Rabbi Aha did not take the miracle at its face value; he added his own interpretation to it in the form of an additional "fact." He was free to do so because neither "fact" nor myth was absolute in his eyes. He did not deny that Elijah, the fabulous *deus ex machina* of the folk myth, appeared in this incident; he simply indicated that Elijah was ineffective in the important anticlimax. Perhaps he meant to indicate that Elijah's intervention was purely fortuitous, for the divine will ultimately and necessarily prevailed. The well-digger must suffer, for some obscure cause.

But Rabbi Aha still worked with the myth of the well-digger, though he shifted the focus from the miracle of the salvation of the well-digger's daughter to the sober fate of the well-digger's son. And we in our turn can feel ourselves in this myth, after our own special fashion. We can appreciate the irony of the death by thirst of the son of a man who did good by alleviating the thirst of others. To Voltaire this might have been sardonic proof of the folly of superstitious ritual—for the wells were dug for the benefit

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of the pilgrims going to worship in Jerusalem in the Holy Temple. But we do not have Voltaire's rationalistic detachment. We can feel that in our present situation we share the fate of the well-digger's son. We have come too late for the one miracle that visits every well. Too late in world history, too late in the family of nations, too late in faith; we have to rescue ourselves, create our own miracles, which are not really miracles.

JEWISH tradition addresses itself to all to whom the Jewish experience is important. Certainly we must approach the tradition—compound of fact, legend, and desire—in no limited provincial spirit; we need no more tendentious historical romances about the Maccabees, or further vulgarizings of King David. Haman is not simply an old-fashioned way of spelling Hitler. A popular Talmudic proverb says: "One Haman is worth six hundred thousand prophets." This sheds no light on conditions in the kingdom of Persia or medieval Spain or modern Germany. But it celebrates the blessings of persecution more aptly than a thousand preachments. The proverb undermines to some extent the notion of Haman's evil and the prophets' virtue; but surely, being as much myth as historically real, Haman and the prophets do not suffer diminution.

Nor does an appreciation of Jewish myth call for study. I recommend that we learn to read the myth in the original Hebrew, not for purist reasons, but because I mean the readers (to invert Shakespeare) "by direction find indirection out." Myth calls for the curious, not the scholastic, temperament. What it requires from the artist and all who approach it freely is an openness, an impulsive, random sentiment. This is not anti-intellectualism or deliberate naivety, but a subtle, living approach that tries for insights —and in art, as in life, we do not study for insights; we prepare for them, wait, and hope to be able to catch them on the wing. It is the same with myth. The meanings are in it, the insights await us, for they are our meanings and our insights for us to discover. We need to look from art to myth and back again; each must be a window and each a mirror.

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AFTER ALL I DID FOR ISRAEL

A Story

MEYER LEVIN

WE HUSBANDS have our game every Wednesday night while the girls are holding their Hadassah committee meeting. In fact it was my idea for the winners to contribute their haul to Hadassah as that gives the girls an extra source of cash for their organization and also it reduces the gambling fever a little, so some of the smaller fish can stay in the swim. A big guy like Sam Bernstein, with all the money he made in the war, when Sam starts splashing around it's tough for guys like Doc to stay in the game; though Doc makes a good living, still on one trip to Hawaii Sam probably blows away more than Doc earns the whole year. Anyway this idea of mine discourages Sam a little, and the game is just as good.

Actually, what it amounts to in the end is that I am contributing the most to Hadassah because I'm a steady winner, but I don't mind, it isn't exactly like money out of my own pocket. I give my share and more than my share anyway to the UJA and the Talmud Torah and all the appeals they've got—they tell you there's going to be only one campaign but every week there's another special appeal for a secret submarine or for some Histadrut outfit or the Hebrew University, and you've got to give, or you're on the spot in the community. Nobody can complain about me; if the really big guys like Sam shelled out in proportion to what I do, Israel could have six universities and they could irrigate it four times over, I can tell you. Still, if I didn't hand over the poker winnings to Hadassah I'd give them to my daughter Babe or to my son Mickey for some foolishness, it's against my principles to keep gambling winnings, and it starts you a bad reputation in the community.

We have our game in turns at one house or another so everybody gets their share of dragging themselves around and of entertaining, and the girls take the same rotation with their committee meeting; as it happens by coincidence—as they call it—pretty much the same bunch of wives gets elected to the committee every year or it would mess up the gang in our game; besides, the leading spirits in a place like Rivervale don't change fast.

THIS time the meeting was at the Bernsteins. They just moved into that big modernistic house that Mitzi Bernstein talked Sam into building so as to give their new son-in-law a start and attract some commissions in the riverside suburbs, though with the Union Station he built for them he'd better try to set up in business somewhere else. What I can't understand is a wall that is not a wall or even a partition; this new theory that this Mammerstein boy got from Frank Lloyd Wright or some other screwball is that the wall shouldn't go all the way up to the ceiling, but that there should be a gap on top. They call it a divider instead of a wall, so Sam and Mitzi got the living room divided into two parts, each part is big enough for two living rooms anyway and this divider wall—amongst friends we call it a garage door—it slides in and out, so the whole shebang can be opened in case of a big affair.

MEYER LEVIN is a well-known novelist, moviemaker, and critic, to mention only a few of his activities in the past two decades. His novels of Jewish life in America (*The Old Bunch, Citizens,* and others) are recognized as ranking with the best. Mr. Levin has also had a lifelong interest in the development of Israel; an early novel, *Yehuda,* dealt with life on a kibbutz, and his film *The Illegals,* a documentary of the illegal emigration to Palestine, was seen in New York in 1948. Mr. Levin's autobiography, *In Search,* was recently published by the Author's Press in Paris.

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They have a whole philosophy about this kind of architecture, that it makes the family closer because you can hear what is going on all over the house, and Mitzi Bernstein says that way a mother can keep track of her kids—but the Bernstein kids are grown up and married. Anyway, their living room is made to order for the Hadassah meetings because while our game is going on we can kibbitz on the girls doing their business in the other compartment, and sometimes their ideas of business methods really give us a lot of laughs.

Because, what is Hadassah anyway, or any of these organizations, as I see it they are all engaged in the business of raising money for Israel, and all these gatherings and rummages and teas may help to give the girls an activity, but the basis of it all is making money for Israel. Of course the way they do it is like kids selling lemonade, but still they gather up quite a few pennies in a top community like Rivervale during the course of a year, and one thing about Hadassah, every cent goes to their hospitals and schools, they haven't got any thirty-thousand-dollar-a-year executives.

Well on this night the game was a little sluggish, you couldn't build up a pot over ten bucks, and we got to listening to the girls yammering in there about how to complete their annual quota. Every six months they keep doubling their quota on themselves and they are out of ways to raise money. Estelle told me for a fact that at the last rummage sale Mitzi Bernstein undertook to raise three thousand dollars, and they had already had so many rummage sales that the girls were sneaking out to the Salvation Army shops to buy stuff to donate to the sale. Worst of all it seems that since the new look, the rummage garments have got to be up to date or you can't even buy them to give away to your *shvartze*. So what did Mitzi do? She actually sold out all of her own wardrobe and even auctioned off the dress on her back, it must have cost Sam five thousand dollars to outfit her, including shopping trips to New York, and I suppose he could have just made out a check for the three thousand in the first place and handed it over to Hadassah—but the girls have got to do things their own way. Mitzi promised to raise it on a rummage, and she had to deliver.

Well, this time they've got another four grand to raise to finish their season, and they've already had their lawn parties and their circus and their theater parties and their rummage sales and their fifty-dollar plate lunches and God knows what. Archie Solow, the raw sonofagun, he put us in a panic with some of his suggestions how the girls could raise the dough, and pretty soon Lil Braverman calls out over the partition, "We heard you, and if you haven't got any better ideas, maybe we'll adopt it! Anything for Israel!"

But seriously, the girls seemed to be in a spot. Right now they've got this additional program, TB. No use kidding ourselves, Mitchel Becker was over there himself for a week and brought back the confidential dope, a lot of the human material they're getting over there is anything but top grade, but what can you expect after what they went through in Europe. They are full of TB and everything. As a matter of fact between ourselves we ought to be glad they are not coming over here.

But there is a problem even worse than the material from Europe and that is the Jews from all these Arab countries, Yemen, and all these African Jews, I never realized they existed. The Doc's wife had a report on them—they are no better than the Arabs, uncivilized, you've got to build them from the ground up. Sometimes I wonder if we really need them in Israel, but I don't want to mix in too much in such discussions, that's their job over there to decide. We're lucky we've got it so good over here, and I'm glad to help out. So from all this we could see that the girls really needed the money, because in addition to the TB program they have undertaken a children's program with these African Jews.

About the only idea they've got left is to have a series of lectures and concerts of Jewish culture and music; I know who that

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idea comes from, the culture lady, that's Doc's beauteous spouse, and I can just see myself getting dragged to these affairs. Besides after getting through paying for halls and speakers and ads and printing, what would they have left? "You'll work your heads off and bother everybody to death and bore everybody stiff and maybe clear two hundred bucks on the series," I yelled over the divider. I was on my last card for a flush and naturally drew the wrong color.

"Okay, then you give us an idea," Mitzi said. She was just coming through with a plate of lox sandwiches.

"Why don't you do something in a big way," I said, "make it all on one deal."

"All right, what?" she said.

Estelle called out if we slobs wanted some coffee, or were we sticking to Scotch? "Why don't you give Sam a break and have some coffee and give us your valuable ideas?"

"Go about it in a businesslike way," I said. "Don't try to force on people things they don't want. First figure out what they want—any businessman will tell you that."

"Yah," Sam said. "And then you've got to remind them they want it. You've got to stimulate their appetite." The way he's kept up his sales since the war, he ought to know about psychology.

"Okay, tell us, we're listening," Mitzi said. "What do people want?"

"Ask yourself," I said. "What do you want most?"

Mitzi couldn't answer right away—fur coats, her own car, trips to Hawaii she's got. But Lil Braverman piped up, "What I want most I can't announce right here"—she never misses a chance—"but next to that I'd like a Cadillac."

"Look how everybody perked up at that idea!" I said. "Everybody wants a Caddy. So why don't you give away a Caddy?"

It wasn't long before I had them convinced of the soundness of my idea. To get you have to give. Look at all the giveaway programs on the radio.

We moved into their meeting and got pencils and paper and figured out a deal on the basis of fifty cents a chance. Even the *goyim* would take a fifty-cent try on a Caddy. We'd sell twenty thousand tickets in no time. And Sam could get us the Cadillac free of dealer's profit from Harry Straus—there was nearly a grand we saved for Israel right off the bat.

But some of the girls were tame. How were they going to sell twenty thousand tickets when the best they ever did was to sell eight hundred seats for the premiere of Ethel Merman?

"Just show the car around," I said. "And give your salesmen some incentive."

"Isn't Israel incentive enough?" the Doc's wife says.

"Look at Archie's movie business," I told her. "He's got incentives such as Clark Gable and Greer Garson—but when he throws in some free dishes he sells more tickets. So throw in a television set for the one that sells the most tickets, get some salesmen's prizes and you'll have every one of our kids bothering the hell out of us to buy blocks of tickets."

They went for it unanimously, provided I accepted the chairmanship of the drive, and how could I refuse?

NATURALLY from then on all the work and responsibility fell on me and it turned out to be more of a job than anybody imagined. Because even though it was a sure thing, my mind wasn't going to be free until I had taken in enough to cover the cost of the car. The first week, honest I felt as if those women were worried I was swindling them. They must have called a hundred times a day with some excuse or other, just to bring in at the end, by the way, how are the tickets going, have we paid for the car yet?

But once I start on a thing I see it through, and I had everybody in Rivervale buzzing to get that Caddy. I put the bee on Milt Richards for a TV set and got him to display it in his window. I got a dozen more prizes out of the leading shops. As soon as we got the Caddy, I started Mickey driving it around, with a big sign, How Would You Like Me For Keeps? My only fear was that the kid would fall in love with the dreamboat and start working on me to buy one. As it turned

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out, I wish that was all that happened to me out of this campaign, I'd be satisfied.

All you heard around town was Who's going to get the Caddy? It was the main topic of conversation at every bridge party and if you walked through Aunt Hetty's Chicken Shack any night you could hear it being discussed at a dozen tables. I started a story that Sam Bernstein was buying a book of tickets every day and that if he won the car he was going to donate it to Israel, to Ben Gurion.

The first couple of thousand we sold easily, but then the plugging began.

The worst of it was the UJA crossed us up by running their campaign at the same time. And in the middle of it all I got a hurryup call from Herbie Axlerod, he's on that Haganah committee, now they're collecting tents, tarpaulins, anything in that line. Even with the summer trade ahead, I sacrificed to them my whole stock of tents that I still had from the army surplus sales, I gave it away at cost price without even figuring handling and overhead and all the rest. Right there I figure I made one of those real donations to Israel that never shows up at the showoff meetings where everybody announces their contribution. Okay, I'm not doing it for the credit. If they haven't got even tents to live in, I'm ready to help out.

I figure I must have spent more of my time on Israel than on my own business, but after all I said they could sell twenty thousand chances, and if I pulled it off, it wouldn't hurt my reputation. I don't even know how much it cost me. To tell the truth, I would have done better to buy blocks of tickets myself, but it wouldn't look right if I won the prize. So I started to give away a chance on the Caddy with every sale over ten dollars, in my stores, figuring that if at least a customer of mine won, it wouldn't hurt business, as the saying goes.

THE last week, we had one of those Israeli war heroes. He came in the UJA campaign to give us the inside dope at these trade lunches where they put the quota on you. He was a colonel. Turned out to be a young kid—twenty-four. Colonel Amos, one of those boys born and raised there. A real clean-eyed nice looking kid, like those *sabras* seem to be, from over there. He was the first one that got through on that road they made, the life-line from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv, I think, though he never said so himself, this boy was very modest and sincere and wouldn't even admit he was a hero, on the contrary all the stories he told were about his *chaverim.*

The first thing you know, the Hadassah got hold of him to stay over, and my wife said why should he be lonesome in a hotel downtown and waste Israeli money, when he can stay with us. So we had this young fellow at the house. He talks a pretty good English. The kids took to him fine, right away they were calling each other *chaver* and *sholom* and all that Hebrew.

Next thing I knew, Babe was wearing her Star of David to school. Let there be no misunderstanding, I gave it to her myself for her sixteenth birthday. With all these Catholic girls wearing their crosses all the time, a Jewish girl can wear her star. I think it's suitable around our own circles, around the Temple and on Jewish holidays and occasions like that. But in a high-class suburb like ours where there is already talk about too many of us coming in since the war, you have to be a little discreet, you don't have to throw it in people's faces. I know for a fact that some of the teachers at her high school don't like us so much. But I didn't say anything to Babe. Luckily she is only sixteen and as I figured it would pass over in a week or two, it was only a childish crush.

WE STILL had two thousand dollars to sell, and Mitzi and Sam Bernstein came through again. They offered their house for a big final party at which we would invite only the best in town, the kind of people who would know they had to come through for that last batch of tickets.

Mitzi opened the garage door of their living room and I have to admit it was impressive. There must have been three hundred people in that room. The liquor alone must have set Sam back a couple of centuries.

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Babe and all her girl friends were dressed up like ladies, and they were running around trying out their sex appeal on everybody, with their books of tickets, and though everybody had their pockets full of tickets already, business was good. I must say it made a real impression, like a high society scene in the movies, the wives made a lot of us put on our tuxedos, and it was a real climax to my campaign, I was proud.

The Doc's wife had found a soprano that sang some Palestine songs, and then some of the youngsters did a hora dance that Colonel Amos had taught them, and the final event was a speech from Colonel Amos.

So he got up and started talking. He isn't a real speaker, but he makes everybody feel like they want to help him get it out. He went over a lot of stuff we heard before about the biggest homecoming in history and how everybody in Israel is ready to give up their own bed to take in a refugee, but all the time I had a feeling he was leading up to something. "You give us your money," he said. "Thanks, we surely appreciate it and are ready to do a good job with it as you know we can do." They're not bashful over there, and that's okay with me, I like people to be proud of what they can accomplish. "You give us your time," he said, "and thanks, though honestly we think it is the best thing a Jew can do with his time is to help Israel. Now we have your money and your time but we want even more," he said. "We want you. We want your sons and your daughters. . . ."

I still couldn't guess what he really meant though I felt he was maybe running off the line. Sure, I had thought of making a trip over there sometimes, maybe next year if business doesn't turn out too bad. I had it in mind as soon as they get some decent hotels built, since I always wanted to go to Europe, we could take a trip to Paris and Italy and wind up looking over Israel.

But Amos had more to say. He doesn't want us to come only as tourists! They are building a new Jewish people over there, he says. They've got the survivors of Europe as their building material, some of them are good but most of them are not first-class material. They're getting all these Yemenite Jews and they are a depressed people, uneducated and primitive, the way I get it they are not much better than the *schvartze* over here, and though they will bring in some good qualities, they have a wonderful spirit and they are tough, still, this is not the type we want to dominate the new Jew. So what they really need over there are some American Jews to raise up the average of the stock!

That's what he wants our sons and daughters for.

Well, I figured maybe he was cleverer than I thought—maybe his speech was a kind of smart compliment to us American Jews, telling us what a high type we are. I figured that he looked pretty good himself as a sample of the new Jew they got over there, and that they would get along all right after they are over the hump of the next few years. Still, I thought it was a little out of place, what he was saying—not everybody would understand it the way I understood it, that it was intended as a smart compliment; people might feel offended if they thought he meant we really ought to send our children over there.

I looked around to see the reaction. The women were all hanging on his words with their lips half-open, with that encouraging grin on their faces, as if they wanted to help him make his speech. Just like when their kids are young and are given a piano recital. I don't think many people really knew what he was saying; they were just looking at him, what a fine sample of Palestine youth, and every one of the women was figuring maybe he would fall in love with her daughter and she'd put him through medical school and since the war was won over in Israel, he wouldn't have to go back, and she could set him up a fine downtown practice.

After his speech we had the last tickets sold, and then the drawing of the lucky number. The Caddy was won by Doc, and everybody was happy, it made the whole campaign perfect. The TV set should by rights have gone to my boy Mickey for the wonderful job he did, but we've got a video,

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and I fixed it up so it would go to Lil Braverman's girl Sheryl.

It was the biggest deal Hadassah ever pulled off around here, and the girls admitted they could never have done it themselves. In fact they gave me a very nice vote of thanks and a token of appreciation, a silver cigarette holder from Jerusalem.

Nobody said anything about Colonel Amos's remarks, and he and my kids and some more youngsters left for the Chicken Shack at about midnight, though Mitzi was serving cold chicken and turkey and real delicatessen chopped liver and anything you could want. Youngsters have to go somewhere else.

We got home pretty late. The kids were already home but they weren't asleep. They were talking in Mickey's room. Our house hasn't got these new dividers like the Bernsteins', but anyway you can hear straight through the walls. Those youngsters were talking through half the night.

The plain fact is, this Israeli put the bug in my kids. I thought after he'd gone it would wear off in a few days. Well, it wasn't so bad with Babe, she soon got a crush on Louis Braverman because he's full of some utopian ideas about a world government and he convinced her that Israel is a return to chauvinism. But my boy Mickey has been reading all these books on Palestine *kibbutzim*. Kids of his age have to be idealistic, and everything idealistic-sounding like socialism appeals to them. So this Israeli talk has a double attraction for them, they're going to set up a socialistic utopia as well as build up this new Jewish people.

With Mickey, it's serious. He wants to give up his courses in business administration and start studying agriculture.

I had a serious talk with him. "Look, Mickey," I said, "we're Americans. We have Israel now just like the Irish have Ireland—but how many Irish kids want to go to Ireland to raise potatoes?"

It's not the same thing, he answers, and he starts in with a lot of talk about it's only an accident that he was born over here, and he really belongs in Israel.

I tried to give him the facts. I told him how they haven't even got tents to live in over there; I told him such hard conditions don't matter to refugees, they are used to even worse conditions, and the Arab Jews never had anything better than tents. For them Israel means progress. But why does a man have to go backwards in civilization?

It's pioneering, Mickey says. The people who first came to America gave up a better life for their ideas, too. All that line of talk. He's swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.

So finally I had to make him see how ridiculous it was. "Do you mean that we should all go to Israel?" I demanded. "There are six million of us. There isn't even room for us in Israel."

No, he says. Only a select few have to go. The best ones.

I've got a real problem on my hands with that boy. He's stubborn, and like me, when he goes after something he does it all the way. I've told him, "Mickey, I've spent my life building up something. It's not for me. It's for my family, for the idea that it will be perpetuated in generation after generation. I've built up the best chain of sport shops in the state. I've made our name mean something in the community, and even among the *goyim*. It stands for honesty and a square deal. . . ." My sincerest words fell on deaf ears. I already feel as if I had a stranger staying in the house. I feel as if my life were wasted. My own son isn't interested in our life any more.

After all I did for Israel, this is how I get paid for it.

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FROM THE AMERICAN SCENE

THE JEWISH OBJECT

A Shopper's Report

RUTH GLAZER

IN THE new religious revival, the theologians and philosophers have it easy; they can battle about the nature of revelation endlessly in the pages of COMMENTARY. Parents and householders, on the other hand, caught up in the new urge toward Jewish observance, find themselves with problems needing immediate, practical answers. Once they have decided that from this Friday night forward the Sabbath will be observed in their house, or that this Chanukah will be marked by the lighting of a menorah, or that they will have a Seder—there is the question of providing the proper ceremonial objects. And, having established what is needed, the next problem is—what will they find when they actually go out to purchase the candlesticks, or the menorah, or a cover for the *challah*, or wine cups, or any of the other objects which can beautify the special usages of the occasion?

The plastic arts, it has been frequently observed, are not among the strong points of Jewish genius, and even the most untutored survey of ritual objects, past and present, will testify to the truth of this feeling. The exhibits at the Jewish Museum in New York City, while rich in historicity, hardly provide a pleasurable aesthetic experience. The overwhelming eclectic ugliness of its Sabbath room, for example, makes one reflect how great must have been the transcendent spirit among the truly pious Jews to have made them so oblivious to the vessels used in their observances. By that same token, the shaken and timorous Jews of today, tentatively feeling their way back to a half-remembered religion, will hardly find aesthetic quality as unimportant as their forebears, especially in a community where so much care is given to the decoration of the home.

ON WINDOW-SHOPPING tours of New York City, undertaken at various times during the past year, I tried to discover what the householder returning to the fold might find in his ritual quest. Of course, this does not tell me what a Jew setting forth on a similar errand would find in Indianapolis or Houston or Los Angeles, but it is a safe guess that it would not be too different.

The obvious place to begin in New York is the Lower East Side. Although with luck a few stores selling candlesticks and menorahs can be found scattered in other neighborhoods, the East Side is the place to which Jews must still turn for menorahs, for tombstones, for culture. Stuck away in its dirty, ugly streets are stores which specialize in the selling of prayer books, *talleisim*, *tefillim*, and also "ritual objects." The clutter of sacred and secular objects in the

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THIS year the displays of Passover settings in the department stores seemed unusually large, with lavish numbers of Seder plates, candleholders, wine cups, and other objects. RUTH GLAZER shopped the stores and here discusses the kind and quality of Jewish ritual objects to be found around New York, and offers some reflections on their origins and future. Mrs. Glazer, born in New York and a graduate of Queens College, has contributed to COMMENTARY and other periodicals; her latest appearance in our pages was with the short story "How We Used to Laugh!" in the October 1949 issue.

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typical window display mirrors vividly the tastes and interests of the clientele. For the learned and pious there are the sets of prayer books, Bibles, and commentaries. For the Zionists there are bronze busts and small plaques of Weizmann and Herzl, plastic tablecloths printed with the map of Israel, bits of silver filigree jewelry from Israel. Completing the window display are rows of key chains and lockets with *mezuzot* and Stars of David, various models of electric memorial lights executed in clear plastic, boxes of shaving powder, a variety of New Year's greeting cards, and several examples of chromium nut dishes and three-tiered sandwich plates. Amid this chaotic miscellany are the ritual objects for which we have come—Sabbath candlesticks, Chanukah menorahs, challah knives, spice boxes for *havdalah,* challah covers, *kiddush* cups and decanters, various items for Passover.

Characteristic of them all is the cheap materials in which they are executed. Challah covers are of the sleaziest white satin, sometimes crudely printed in blue ink, sometimes machine-embroidered. Challah knives are simple replicas of kitchen bread knives with imitation bone handles; I did not see the slightest attempt to invest them with any grace or beauty in view of their special festive function. Almost the only metal used is chromium. Brass candlesticks, it is true, can still be found in great number under the secular auspices of the brass shops clustered on Allen Street. Infrequently it is possible to find silver, generally plate. The silver, probably to save on expense, is most often worked in slender, anemic shapes echoing the Tiffany style of the 1920's. It is also clear from their anonymity of feature that they were not designed for Sabbath candles but were simply part of the regular complement of any jeweler's stock of dinner candlesticks. The sellers of brass have either been more fortunate or more intelligent in relying almost entirely on old and aesthetically sound designs, although here and there, unfortunately, a few have been tempted into experimentation.

As for the chromium "art objects," I must confess to a bias against the material. Its harsh and tinny texture seems to invest any object, no matter how carefully worked, with a shoddy quality. But it is precisely in the workmanship that one feels the greatest hopelessness. I cannot believe, in the first place, that these candlesticks were ever *designed* in any artistic or architectural sense. Rather they seem the product of a typical process in small manufacturing where the owner-designer-workman-salesman decides to add this new "feature" or that new "model" because his competitor has already emerged on the market with it, or because he aims to beat his competitor to it. The emergence this past Chanukah of a chromium candelabrum that plays "Rock of Ages" is an unhappy case in point.

Anyway, the question never seems to be what is appropriate or beautiful, but what is Acme Chromium doing, and, above all, what does "the public" want: it is in the name of this hapless group that the greatest sins are committed. Not that the public is ever asked what it wants, or that there would be any use in asking; the public is simply permitted to choose from what is produced. The fact that chromium candlesticks are bought or that Model A is preferred over Model B does not mean that both chromium Model A *and* Model B might not be dropped altogether if there were any other choice.

At a time when there is hardly a rabbi or community thinker throughout the country who does not have in his pocket (if not already in print) a program for the beautification and revivification of the Jewish tradition, and when new synagogues, often based on the most modern—sometimes, perhaps, too modern—principles of design, are going up in innumerable cities, it is astonishing that no one has apparently sought to attract the attention of serious artists to the problem of creating Jewish ritual objects for our times and taste worthy of the tradition they represent. I do not say that the results of such an effort would necessarily be good, but they could hardly fail to be better than what we have now.

SHORTLY before Passover of 1950 I witnessed a painful enactment of the process of choice under duress that awaits the shopper who goes out to find ritual art objects for his home. In honor of the season, and also, presumably, to help sell Passover goods, Macy's had arranged an elaborate display of a model Passover table. Carefully lit, and placed on a fine Persian rug, the

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table was set for twelve and decorated with a variety of "art objects." These included silver goblets, two large silver candelabra rising to a height of two feet and each holding some half dozen candles, and, at the head of the table, a large gold cylinder with three slots to hold the three ritual *matzos*. On the flat top of the cylinder were arrayed the lamb bone in a hollowed-out golden lamb, the egg in an egg cup, and the *charoseth* in a little wheelbarrow (the other herbs necessary for the service reposed in less literary vessels). As for the huge, gleaming candelabra, they were engraved with every conceivable symbol. Without even straining, I was able to make out a profile of Herzl, a ship, presumably arriving in Israel, with immigrants descending a rope ladder, a menorah, a Star of David, a waving flag, and grapes, all rendered with stupendous realism—some of the grapes even looked a little mashed. In what space remained was a lengthy Hebrew text; not an inch of the two-foot enormity remained uncovered. In a dreadful way, it was impressive.

Pressing against the plush ropes marking off the table were crowds of admiring Jews. Was it the silver candelabra and the gold *matzah* holder they were admiring? I think not. It was the gaudy elegance of the "Regency" table, the striped satin seats of the chairs whose color scheme extended to the pillows on which the head of the house would recline, and finally the glistening array of china, silver, linens, and crystal. Most of all, perhaps, what attracted the crowd was the flattering suggestion that this gorgeous panoply was possible in every Jewish home. But what happens when the admirers attempt to imitate?

In the adjoining area customers could buy not only groceries, but also "ritual objects"—matzah covers, candlesticks, platters for the bitter herbs, *charoseth*, etc. Buyers of these platters were faced with three choices: a ceramic platter carelessly glazed in harsh colors; a chromium platter chased with Hebrew letters and stamped with cuplike indentations; the chromium design executed in copper. The perplexity and disappointment of the buyers was expressed in one constantly repeated question: "Don't you have anything else?"

One more painful example: the matzah covers. These were of the tawdriest white rayon satin, bordered in carelessly sewed gold-colored fringe already puckered around the edges, and machine-embroidered in a leaf design with varicolored thread. In the center the word matzah in Hebrew characters was stitched in more gold. The distaste and resignation with which I saw at least a dozen of these bought was sad to witness.

And yet it is not impossible for a matzah cover to be beautiful. I have seen one of Yemenite workmanship that was brought from Israel by a young soldier. It was not the sort of thing, for some reason, which anyone takes the trouble to export, yet in its gentleness and fineness of execution it breathed all that tenderness which the anxious crowd in Macy's Passover room was seeking. This cover was a rectangle of fine, creamy silk, almost transparent. It was embroidered in the same places as its American counterpart and with essentially the same design. In the center was the word matzah in Hebrew script, and below it on either side sprays of flowers and leaves carefully and delicately embroidered in lovely shades of green, lavender, and brown. The border was a leaf and vine design worked in the same colors. It did not shriek in bold letters that it was indeed from the land of Israel; the piece of earth from which it originated was irrelevant. It had simply been made of fine materials by a skillful workman, and it was the integrity and honesty of this workmanship which was so touching. It had been made, not for some anonymous "market," but for itself.

This year, the huge candelabra were missing from Macy's Passover display; otherwise, matters were much the same as in 1950, down to the mingled eagerness and frustration of the customers. Elsewhere in New York, the introduction of occasionally more expensive items marked no real rise in quality.

One new element, however, has been the increase over the past year in the number and variety of objects imported from Israel. These require some special discussion.

The bare simplicity that we have come to associate with "modern" design, the emphasis on form and texture rather than decoration, seems to have conquered in Israel. The filigree work so characteristic of the

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Middle East, which was once important in Palestinian silver work, is now seen only rarely. Most of the pieces displayed are done in oxidized copper—a greenish metal. Some few items are in silver plate, a goodly collection in ceramics, and a very few in sterling silver. Happily, the days of the olive-wood letter opener stamped "Jerusalem" seem to be at an end.

Most characteristic of Israeli design is the use of Hebrew characters for decoration. In some pieces there is an attempt at archaism with the use of letters and figures reproduced from what one is led to conclude are old inscriptions. But on the whole the modern block letters are most favored.

Surprisingly enough, only a comparatively small proportion of the objects seem to be designed for ritual purposes. What we may call the "secular" collection consists of a wide assortment of plates and bowls of oxidized copper which are used in America as ash trays, candy dishes, and fruit bowls, or sometimes simply displayed for decoration. The designs are unpretentious and follow a formula of conventional shapes decorated with raised Hebrew lettering, either in the same metal or in polished copper, around the rim or in the center. Occasional human figures or reproductions of fruit, generally bunches of grapes, are added. The work in ceramics seemed to me to be the poorest, in both design and execution. Available in this medium are "souvenir" plates, and a candelabrum offered in a number of rather inappropriate shades such as dusty pink and lime green.

In the religious objects the greatest ingenuity seems to have gone into the Chanukah menorahs. Many of them, particularly among those in oxidized copper, are constructed to burn not the little Chanukah candles, but little pools of oil which recall vividly the original miracle of Chanukah. A number of fine, carefully worked, and expensive menorahs are displayed in sterling silver. These rely heavily on the use of lettering as an element of design.

The objects for Passover have received more casual treatment at the hands of the designers. If anything, they seem to be Israeli reproductions of East European plates and goblets. Apart from two or three massive bronze matzah holders obviously meant for institutional use, the platters, done in silver plate, repeat in no very inspired form the old pattern of lettering in the stations for the egg, the bone, the *charoseth*, and the bitter herbs. In this case, however, the lettering is utilitarian rather than decorative. The goblets, too, are no more than weakened copies of massive European chalices.

In general, even the better pieces of work, such as those in sterling silver, are characterized at most by a certain sturdy utilitarianism, with none of the freedom that distinguishes the inspired from the pedestrian. As yet one does not feel the sure hand of a living style with its own inner forces for growth. But some of these earnest and honest efforts do offer hope that a style of real merit may yet evolve from these many hesitant beginnings. Nothing created in America for Jewish ritual purposes shows even that much character.

It is hard to say how much of the work displayed at the various importing houses is characteristically Israeli. To the American purchaser, this is not altogether an irrelevant question. If he is buying a pair of candlesticks because he happens to need a pair of candlesticks, it may be unimportant to him whether they come from France or Java or the United States. But if he buys a dish only because he wants to have some object near him which comes from the land of Israel, then he is likely to hope that it will in some way represent the spirit of the country. From this point of view, one wonders what is peculiarly Israeli in a ceramic plate decorated with the smiling face of a young woman labeled "Halutza" or a row of houses tagged "Scene in Tel Aviv." An inscription albeit in Hebrew does not make a style.

Israeli manufacturers perhaps do not realize the feeling with which their products are received by American Jews. The ritual objects, on the one hand, are endowed with a special authenticity, while the bowls, the ash trays, and the candy dishes create in the purchaser a glow of group feeling and identification. The young couple whom I observed buying three plates decorated with the words "Souvenir of Israel" (whose meaning they had to ask) to hang up in the dining room of their new house illustrate the feeling of many American Jews. Unless what they are offered is ugly beyond

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redemption, they are willing to suspend the aesthetic judgment they would ordinarily bring to bear on their purchases. What is important to them is that by hanging up these plates they are affirming that theirs is a Jewish home in which Jewish values, however dimly apprehended, are treasured.

It would seem, then, that the Jews of America will not be able to depend on the ravishment of their senses to enjoy their new-found Judaism. Like their materially less fortunate ancestors, it is the word and the tradition which will have to be their support and guide. And this in itself may be more traditional than we think. Perhaps it was not indifference, but a clear notion of what was important, that enabled our ancestors to be happy surrounded by the nondescript, dowdy Jewish objects we may see in our grandparents' homes: perhaps, beyond indifference, there was an active will to keep the sacred and profane in a proper perspective to one another. Today, too, it will have to be the spirit of the candle-lighting and of the home in which the candles are kindled, rather than the material form of the candlestick, that captures the heart of the Jewish child. But perhaps in America we may find the way to be observant and beautiful too.

CHORUS OF THE TRUE UNNOTICED POETS

(After attending the Harvard Poetry Conference of August 1950.)

PETER VIERECK

1.

It is a curse. Our fingers fade away,
And no one thanks us that the rhythms stay.
For this we earn your mean and daily No.

Some perchers safely grace the wrists of kings.
We sing the tumult of storm-wearier breasts.
For this we earn humiliating crusts.

Expose, expose: "Red ink is all he sings.
Come read our blood." This is unbearable:
That even a single passer-by should love

Not us, not every least last syllable.

2.

We gallivant on sidewalks made of air;
We chirp true insults, but they reach no ear;
And though Troy's Helen now is passing by

And swaying to our tunes unknowingly,
It is as when ghost touches living thigh:
Our love unnoticed though we wrote the play.

The fingers fade. The wines, the blood-wines stay.
We are those vines that tell the pampered goat:
"We'll bear—though now you crassly gnaw our root—

Libations when the priest shall cut your throat."

PETER VIERECK's latest volume of poetry is *Strike Through the Mask* (1950). His article "Pure Poetry, Impure Politics, and Ezra Pound" appeared in the April COMMENTARY.

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CEDARS OF LEBANON

PARABLE OF THE VOICE

A Selection from "The Innocents"

HERMANN BROCH

THE sudden death of HERMANN BROCH in New Haven on Memorial Day cut short the life of a writer who, despite his years, still had an infinite amount left to say. Broch was a unique phenomenon in more than one respect. It was not only that he became a great novelist, after waiting until his early forties to devote himself fully to his writing, with a successful career as an industrialist behind him; what was perhaps most special about his mind was its acute sense of the position in history of the age in which he lived—his heightened awareness, that is, of contemporaneity. This sense he put to aesthetic as well as intellectual uses, as can be seen in his two major novels, a trilogy called *The Sleepwalkers* (published in English translation in 1934) and *The Death of Virgil* (1945). He had recently finished a philosophical study of mass psychology, to be published in three volumes, that promises to be an even greater mine of insights into the social nature of our times.

Broch could say, with the Latin poet, that nothing human was foreign to him. His interests were universal but not dilettantish; he possessed an enormous erudition. He was, among other things, a Jew interested in his Jewishness, intimate with it and perhaps in many ways better able to explain it than those who bore their Jewishness more conventionally. The present "Parable" is but a small part of the evidence for that. It constitutes the introduction to his last published work of fiction, *Die Schuldlosen* ("The Innocents"), "a novel in eleven tales," which was issued late last year in German by the Rhein-Verlag in Zurich and is as yet not published in English. (The "Parable" was translated from the German by Jean Starr Untermeyer.)

HERMANN BROCH was born in Vienna in 1886, and grew up there, entering the family business after finishing his education as an engineer. In 1927, he returned to his university studies, concentrating on his true interests: mathematics, philosophy, and literature. At the same time he began to write his first novel, *The Sleepwalkers,* whose publication immediately established him as a major novelist of our time, one deserving to be mentioned in the same breath as Joyce, Mann, Proust. Henceforth he wrote steadily—criticism, plays, and philosophy, as well as fiction.

In 1938, when Hitler occupied Austria, Broch was imprisoned. In his cell he began to write *The Death of Virgil,* his second major effort, in an attempt to understand and render understandable what was happening to Europe and himself. At the time Broch was sure that he would never get out of the Nazis' hands alive, and his writing was also a way of preparing himself for death. But he was released shortly, and came to this country in the fall of that same year, 1938, taking up his residence first in New York and then in Princeton, where he received a Rockefeller grant to enable him to pursue his study of mass psychology. Two years ago he was called to Yale University, where he was working when overtaken by death.

Those who knew him cannot but feel that his departure was premature; he was still too young, too curious, too energetic and productive to die, still too closely bound to the living. The loss is one to American culture as well as to world literature. As his fame grows—as it most certainly will—and his works receive increasing attention in this country—as they most certainly will—the beneficial effects of his presence among us will make themselves more obvious than they are now.

This is the second time that the work of Hermann Broch has been represented in COMMENTARY; readers are directed to his review-article dealing with the late Elizabeth Langgässer's novel, *Das Unauslöschliche Siegel* ("The Indelible Seal"), which appeared in the August 1950 issue.—ED.

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ONE day, to the Rabbi Levi bar Chemjo, who lived most highly famed in Poland more than two hundred years ago, there came his students and asked:

"Why was it, Rabbi, that the Lord, whose name is blessed, lifted up His voice as He began the Creation? Had He wished to address with His voice the light, the waters, the stars, and the earth, as well as the creatures who found themselves thereon, calling them into life, in order that they should hear Him and follow His commands, must they not already have been in existence for this purpose? But none of all this had previously existed, and none of these could hear Him, since He created them after He had lifted up His voice. And that is our question."

Thereupon the Rabbi Levi bar Chemjo raised his eyebrows very high, and most unwillingly he replied:

"The speech of the Lord—blessed like His name—is His silence, and His silence is His speech. His seeing is blindness, and His blindness is sight. His doing consists in not doing, and His not doing is His deed. Go home and ponder this."

Troubled, because it was evident that they had annoyed him, they went away, and in fearful hesitation they returned on the following day.

"Forgive us, Rabbi," shyly began the one selected to be spokesman. "You told us yesterday that for the Lord, whose name is blessed, doing and not doing are the same. How then did it happen that He Himself distinguished His doing from His not doing, since He rested on the seventh day? And how could He, who was able to set everything in motion with a single breath, be in need of rest, or become weary? Was the work of Creation such a strain for Him that He had to rouse up Himself by His very own voice, in order to be able to do it?"

THE others nodded assent to this discourse. And as the Rabbi noticed that they eyed him anxiously the while, to see whether he would again become impatient with them, he laid his hand upon his mouth so that the smile behind his beard would not become apparent to them. And he said:

"Let me reply to you with a counter-question. Why did He, who had announced Himself in His sacred name, deign to gather the angels around Him? Was it to support Him in any way, He who was really in no need of support? Why did He surround Himself with them who was sufficient unto Himself? Now go home and ponder this."

They returned home, astonished at the counter-question he had posed, and after half a night of debating the question they returned on the morning to their teacher and announced joyfully:

"We believe that we have understood your question and can answer it."

"So let me hear then," said Rabbi Levi bar Chemjo.

Then they seated themselves before him and their spokesman gave voice to that which they had found in their thoughts.

"Because, O Rabbi, according to your interpretation, to the Lord, whose name is blessed, silence and speech—as do generally all opposites—always signify the same thing: therefore is His speech contained in each of His silences. Yet He concluded that a conversation which no one hears is meaningless, as meaningless as a deed which takes place in an uncreated void; so He deigned, for the sake of fulfilling His holy nature, to compel the angels to listen all around Him. Therefore He directed His voice to them as He commanded the Creation, and they, following this mighty work, became so exhausted that they needed to rest; then He rested with them."

Great was their fright when at this the Rabbi bar Chemjo now laughed aloud; he laughed and the eyes above his beard were almost lost in laughter.

"So, you hold the Lord, whose name is blessed, for a mountebank at a fair who—like a buffoon, before His angels—raps with his baton and announces his tricks? It almost seems to me that He made fools like you so that He could laugh at them, as I do now, for verily His earnestness is His laughter and His laughter is earnest."

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They were ashamed, but nevertheless happy to see the Rabbi so jolly, and they implored:

"Help us just a little bit further, Rabbi."

"I will do it," responded their teacher, "and again a counter-question shall serve my purpose. Why did God, the Holy One, use seven days for His Creation, when He could have finished it in the flick of an eye?"

THEY went home to deliberate and as they stepped before the Rabbi on the following day they knew they were nearing the solution: however, their spokesman said:

"You pointed out the way to us, Rabbi, for we have perceived that the world, which the Lord—let His name be blessed—has created, exists in time, and that the Creation, because it indeed already belongs to what has been created, must needs have a beginning and an end. Yet for the sake of a beginning, time must already have been in existence, and the angels were called to their places for that small stretch of time before the beginning of the Creation, rushing through time with their wings, and thus bearing it onward. Without the angels it would be impossible for God's timelessness to exist, His timelessness in which, by reason of His holy decree, time is embedded."

Rabbi Levi bar Chemjo seemed satisfied and said:

"Now you are on the right track. However, your first question was concerned with the voice that the Lord in His holiness lifted up for the Creation—how goes it with this?"

Then the students spoke:

"We have striven sorely to come to the point which we have conveyed to you. But we have not attained to the last question which was our first one. Since you are kindly disposed to us once more, we hope you will give us the answer."

THAT will I do," answered the Rabbi, "and it will be short."

And so he began:

"In everything that He, whose name is blessed, has made or is still to make—and how should it not be so—there is part of His holy nature. What, then, is speech and silence together? Verily, of all things that I know, it is time which possesses such double characteristics. Yes, it is time, and although it encloses us and streams through us, it is both muteness and keeping silent, but when we become old and learn to listen backwards, we hear a gentle murmuring and that is the time which we have left behind us. And the further toward the past we listen, the more distinctly shall we be able to hear the voice of time and the silence of time, which He in His majesty has created for His own sake, but also for the sake of time, so that through us it shall complete the Creation. And the more time that has flowed away, the mightier for us becomes the voice of time. We shall grow with it, and at the end of time we shall grasp its beginning, and hear the calling up of the Creation, for then we shall understand the silence of the Lord in the holiness of His name."

The students were struck dumb. But as the Rabbi vouchsafed nothing further but sat there motionless with closed eyes, they tiptoed away.

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ON THE HORIZON

"THE LAST ILLUSION" AND "TERESA"

Two Films on the Reconciliation of America and Europe

NATHAN GLICK

IN TWO recent films—the American *Teresa* and the German *The Last Illusion*—America's legendary innocence and optimism are again contrasted with Europe's intimacy with evil and immersion in tragedy. But instead of proving irreconcilable—as they usually do in the popular press—the differences turn out, in the context of the films, to be complementary, both pictures ending on the symbolic note of trans-Atlantic marriage. It is true that these marriages promise a degree of conflict; but they also offer the hope, contained in the statement of an American student in Germany in *The Last Illusion*, that nations that have fought one another can be better friends once they have been reconciled than they could be if they had never been enemies. This Spinozistic formulation unfortunately does not take into account the manner in which the fight was conducted. Gandhi was shrewder: he knew that the atmosphere of a struggle largely determined the possibilities of subsequent amity. And we have learned that the experience of extermination camps, saturation bombing, and atomic annihilation cannot so easily be repaired by the workings of natural compassion.

But it is precisely the achievement of *The Last Illusion* that its makers can continue to love while recognizing the full extent of the evil in the beloved object. The English title is misleading, unless it intends a warm, mild irony. This is not the story of the shattering of a homecoming German Jewish professor's final illusion about his mother country, but of the ambiguity and refinement of his illusions—for there is always another "last" illusion beyond the one just dispelled. *Der Ruf*, the original German title, is more properly open to interpretation. Taken literally, it refers to the "call" of the homeland and in particular to the "invitation" extended to the professor by the German university at which he had taught. But it contains the further implication of a "calling" in the religious or destined sense, and here it implies a vocation not merely to teach but also to be a witness.

Having decided to exchange his peaceful, comfortable, admired position in a university in Los Angeles for his old philosophy chair in Germany, Professor Mauthner finds it consoling to believe that now he is wanted and needed. He is unwilling, he tells his disapproving fellow exiles in actor Fritz Kortner's culture-laden croak, to condemn a whole people: "There is no nation of criminals nor one of heroes." He does not know how he himself would have behaved under the same pressures. And apart from professional and political impulses (or rationalizations), he is drawn irresistibly to Germany because it is his home and the Germans are, in spite of everything, his people. These make up Mauthner's "illusions," or perhaps they can all be subsumed under the single illusion that while governments change, people do not; at the very

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NATHAN GLICK, who here discusses two recent films which throw some degree of light on the relations between Americans and Europeans, has been a frequent contributor of reviews and articles to COMMENTARY, and has written movie criticism for the *Progressive*. He was born in New York in 1919, and attended the City College of New York.

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least, one can depend on one's family and old friends.

The scene on the cold, foggy gray ship taking Mauthner across the Atlantic, coming directly after the sunshine, music, and camaraderie of his Los Angeles home, establishes a premonitory feeling of the ominous, as if he were being vaguely lowered into some version of hell. As Mauthner stares out at the dense wall of mist that is all he can see of Europe and recites Heine's moving poem about the exile's return, he is approached by an anonymous whitebeard dressed somewhat incongruously in a sports cap. Since the film is generally so direct and unpretentious, I hesitate to read a deliberate symbolism into this character, but in the context of the phantom-like ship it is perhaps justifiable to view him as the Wandering Jew; or an agent of some spiritual orthodoxy like the ubiquitous messenger of God in *The Dybbuk*. When in response to several monosyllabic questions Mauthner reveals that he is going neither to France nor to Switzerland, but to Germany, the stern old man turns away, still impassive, but with a fleeting shadow of disapproval on his face.

Arrived in Berlin, Mauthner looks up the elderly couple through whom he has been sending food and clothing to his wife in Germany. He discovers that, instead of trying to find his wife, they had sold his packages to raise money for a pregnant daughter. This is the moment of his first disillusionment. But despite the fact that his friends have proved shifty and not quite loyal—yet not quite disloyal—there are extenuating circumstances, and besides, they know and are ashamed of their guilt, even as they justify it. Mauthner meets his wife by chance in a black-market coffee shop, and before they have finished absorbing each other's appearance with sad hungry eyes, they are back to the old quarrel that had separated them even before Hitler. We learn that she is a Gentile and that under the Nazis she raised their son to accept an expedient Aryan husband as his true father. Mauthner's pent-up bitterness spills out in a rush of recrimination: she has always resented his being a Jew, she has betrayed him and her son. But again: what would he have had her do, she asks, expose their son to Nazi persecution?

With this scene an ambiguity is introduced into the film's treatment of the theme of personal guilt. For the first time, Mauthner is revealed as capable of hysterical flare-ups, and his wife reminds him that it is this propensity, added to a morbid suspicion of her feelings toward Jews, that broke up their marriage. Played by Johanna Hofer (Kortner's wife in actual fact) with sensitive dignity, softened by mild vulnerable eyes, the wife is at least as persuasive as Mauthner himself. On its subtlest level, which evokes the underworld of suspected motives, the quarrel remains unresolved. The surface quarrel, however, is made up, and it is, significantly, the wife, sick of the bitterness that has been the constant atmosphere of her life in Germany, who makes the first conciliatory gesture.

Mauthner has by this time been characterized as a man of feeling, urbane, idealistic, aware of his own faults, tolerant of others—in short a typical representative of *civilized* Europe. So we are unprepared for the violence and prophetic fury with which, in his opening lecture at the university, he lashes the Nazis and those implicated in Germany's guilt. For a few moments the film departs from its tone of private, domestic intelligence, its sensitive and deft notation of small-scale pleasures and exacerbations, and aspires to the stern grandeur of Old Testament judgment. It is evidence, I think, of the moral resilience of *The Last Illusion* that Mauthner should argue against the idea of collective guilt to his fellow exiles in California, but turn about, when addressing the Germans who stayed on, and insist on the complicity in the deeds of the Nazis of even those who did nothing at all. He has accepted the obligation of the civilized man to reveal each person's special blindness and so to encourage a spiritual balance.

The response of the students to Mauthner's talk is thematically the climax of the film, for it tests not only the sincerity of Germany's invitation to him to return, but whether he any longer really has a "calling" to teach this new generation of youth. Here, too, the makers of the film show the courage of their ambiguity. The camera withdraws into the objectivity of a sustained long shot of the lecture hall, leaving the professor isolated on his small exposed

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podium, while the sound track allows the walls to echo the occasional falsetto of Kortner's high-pitched jeremiad. But the closing words of the speech are suddenly touched with a new note of charity, at which point the voice becomes lowered and paternal, and the camera relents sufficiently to study in close-up the impassive faces of the audience. The small organized Nazi contingent leads the exodus, followed by a troubled majority of students, who seem uncertain whether their departure is a political gesture or just the customary filing out at the end of the class. They are still uncommitted, but vaguely hostile since they have not yet overcome the need to sneer at the come-lately democratic pedagogues from overseas. They have been through a cynical school: war, Russian occupation, and then Western occupation. In this context, the weight of the small group of idealists, with their serious moved faces, who remain to applaud by tapping on the seats in front of them, seems greater than their numbers. What is most admirable in this scene is the refusal of the director to reassure the audience, as Hollywood almost always feels compelled to do, that the sound track and all good movie workers are on the side of the idealists, that the wicked will be punished and defeated, and the waverers see the light.

IN THE end, Mauthner dies from the shock of his return. His body cannot endure the intensity of emotion evoked by the combination of the familiar and the terrible. At a university reception in his honor, he hears the same bloodthirsty anti-Semitic taunts, and witnesses the same mindless violence which more than a decade earlier made Germany for him a nightmare to be fled. But his despair is personal, not political: he can no longer maintain himself spiritually in an atmosphere so overwhelmingly devoid of love. He has, in exile, been drained of nourishment by separation from the roots of his culture and from his personal attachments. He turns for consolation, during his illness, not to the young American assistant who appears to be in love with him—a role played with perhaps unintentional appropriateness by Rosemary Murphy, daughter of the former political adviser to General Clay—but to his German wife. In a passage of bitter-sweet melodrama, Mauthner's Nazified son, still unaware of their relationship, tells the unconscious, dying man of his change of heart, a conversion which takes place under the influence of the American girl—whom he is destined to marry. For while the older Europeans sought an asylum in America, the European youth looks to it for a revival of innocence and a new kind of experience.

In the version of *The Last Illusion* shown in the United States, the short final scene of Mauthner's funeral cortege following a hearse emblazoned with the Star of David was omitted. It is a grim procession, summing up the physical and spiritual tragedy of Germany; but, in keeping with the film's sorrowful optimism, the most fanatical Jew-baiter in the university Nazi cell silently falls in line behind Mauthner's family and friends. One can understand how the makers of the movie were tempted by this final contrivance to provide it with a consoling solution. But for most of its doggedly intelligent, at times brilliant, and continuously moving length, *The Last Illusion* has been saying something more modest and more honest, namely, that the situation in Germany is still open because the human element is unpredictable.

The Last Illusion, however, is not primarily about the Jewish problem. It is intended as a tentative portrait of a nation *in extremis,* an exploration of the play of social and human forces in postwar Germany, against the background of an American experience. And while it does not flaunt its realism, it puts to shame the fatuous tourist's view of *A Foreign Affair,* the slick pseudo-documentarianism of *Berlin Express,* and even Rosselini's bleak and merciless *Germany, Year Zero,* which expresses in its pure form a distinctly European kind of pessimism. The realism of *The Last Illusion* is not a stranger's note-taking but the modulated, insidiously persuasive accuracy of the disabused lover.

IN CONTRAST to *The Last Illusion, Teresa* may be described as an exploration of postwar America against the background of a brief but crucial European experience. Where *The Last Illusion* is concerned with people who, however they may be buffeted about by politics, at least influence their

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cultural environment, *Teresa* has to do with the uneducated, the unsophisticated, and the uninfluential, who are simply acted upon by their culture. The official Americans in *The Last Illusion* are conquerors without a calling: good-natured young civil-affairs officers almost sublimely unaware of the complicated difficulties created by the occupation in the lives of the native population; whose use of capitalized initials (meaningless to most Germans) as a way of publicly designating the jumble of government agencies symbolizes the inhuman impersonality, neither kind nor sadistic, of victorious bureaucracies. The American plenipotentiaries of *Teresa* are raw infantry soldiers who respond to the natives—in this case, Italian villagers living in the area of battle—with greater directness, whether of generosity or hostility, than the bored young men of the occupation staff in Germany.

The inarticulate, confused boy played by John Ericson is an interesting reversal of the Hollywood version of the GI, and particularly of the soldier from New York. Ericson is neither sharp nor comic; he is moderately simple-minded, moderately sensitive, and more than moderately baffled by his emotions and by the women around him. He has been a mother's boy at home, and adopts a similar filial relation to the European women, to whom he appears a strange image of the conquering, powerful American. He is treated by both the Italian girl and her mother as someone in need of love and protection. Under their traditional, tactful acceptance of this role he flourishes into manhood, whereas once back in New York his own spiritually predatory mother again drains him of self-respect and self-possession.

This contrast in the role of women is not the deliberate theme of the film, but it is its strongest overtone. The American women —the hero's nagging mother and irritable sister—are domineering types who lord it over their weakling men. Teresa, played by Pier Angeli, wants to reverse the situation, to make him accept the role of head of the family. Although she has lived in a small Italian village her whole life, she seems all-knowing and worldly. She has absorbed stoicism and resignation and a tired affectionate wisdom from her parents and her culture. When she is aggressive or firm, it is only in order to earn her decent traditional submissive role. She has something of the preternatural sagacity of the city urchins in *Shoeshine* and *Paisan*. On arriving at the tenement home she is to share with the boy's family, she senses the psychological relationships among its members with a directness and clarity the boy has never felt. She wants to show love and respect to the boy's ineffectual father and moves to embrace him, but Philip, accepting without question his mother's negative opinion of his father, stops her.

THE discovery of such an actress as Ingrid Bergman by Hollywood reflected the need for a kind of woman that America, or at least the American movie industry, seemed incapable of nurturing. This was a woman who could love generously, loyally, in defiance of convention if necessary, and who did not use her attractiveness as a weapon with which to dominate men. Pier Angeli, the heroine of *Teresa,* is in this tradition of European woman. Someone has called her a sparrow version of Ingrid Bergman, but she is more than that. Bergman always had about her an aura of cultivation; her simplicity seemed the result of complicated artifice. Pier Angeli is thin and small, giving the impression of being undernourished and very young, but her face has an ageless wisdom and dignity.

When Teresa shows disappointment at her first sight of the slum apartment in New York, she is shedding her illusion of a fantastically rich America along with her earlier illusion of Philip's ability to take care of her. This disappointment is particularly revealing since she makes such modest demands on life. (The coy words of the script-writer, "I am very capable of love," are transformed by the quality of Pier Angeli's face and speech into a touching expression of self-knowledge.) The contrast of the physical landscapes in the Italian and New York sequences reinforces the film's sympathy with the European as against the American mode of life. In Italy we are shown open fields and traditional architecture: even during their Roman honeymoon, the couple look out on a magnificent public square. Of New York Teresa gets to see, besides her tenement block and the view from the roof of clotheslines and radio wires, Central Park, a rec-

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tangle of nature stuck into the asphalt heart of the city, and Jones Beach, a man-made desert on the edge of the ocean.

In *The Last Illusion,* Europe is portrayed as in a condition of ruin and despair from which only an infusion of the American spirit can redeem her. *Teresa,* on the other hand, finds the greater physical and spiritual lack in America, and looks to the warm and tolerant European tradition represented by the heroine to balance American immaturity and crudity. It is part of the generous absence of provincialism in both films that the European film-makers should overrate American virtue and the American film-makers exaggerate the wisdom of Europe. To the extent that each is a persuasive work of art, it refutes its own self-criticism. We should be fortunate if we could settle for a combination of the seasoned culture that went into *The Last Illusion* and the fresh, spontaneous good will of *Teresa.*

HARUSPEX

IRVING LAYTON

As the afternoon wore on,
The wind rose like an American tariff;
I, more credulous than my parents,
Sat on my gardenstool, hoping for signs;
Something perhaps to fall out of the sky—
An eagle, like a piece of gunmetal,
Cracking the wall of air, flashing
The forbidden message from broken wings—
Perhaps a never-before-seen snake; or at the least
A typewriter in the tall grass, its keys
Plucked by a legion of dry crickets.
But all I saw were great swathes of shadow
Moving across the fields like escaped jailbirds.

All afternoon
I watched the Mediterranean sky
Dotted with soft silver-ringed clouds
Like Greek city states,
Like white garlands for an Athenian holiday.
But look! in the north the Macedonian king
Has fastened his gray tunic
And moves slowly, slowly down the Thracian plains;
An armorer gathers the crimson daggerblades,
The heavens darken, and all about me
The rabblegrass, abject,
Whitens under the cruel skywind.

Little one,
Little goddess of mine
Asleep in your crib,
I am afraid.

IRVING LAYTON lives in Montreal, Canada, and teaches there. He has published poetry and fiction in numerous periodicals, and his poem "Gothic Landscape" was printed in last July's COMMENTARY.

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THE STUDY OF MAN

POLITICAL THINKING: ANCIENTS VS. MODERNS

The New Battle of the Books

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

IT WAS the mark of his age, John Stuart Mill once wrote, that "men may not reason better concerning the great questions in which human nature is interested, but they reason more." Mill was entirely innocent of the faint note of irony which some readers might find in this remark. He intended it simply as an expression of hope and optimism. In the democratic faith of his circle, quantity was held to be as much a good as quality; if men reasoned more, particularly if more men reasoned more, it was unimportant that they reasoned no better. Mill and his friends were heartened to watch the flow of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books from the presses and into the hands of a steadily growing public. And they decided that what technology had done to promote the habit of reading, science might do to promote the habit of reasoning.

Thus, at a time when political democracy was still in its infancy, ingenious men were already devising schemes for the establishment of a democracy of intellect. The common denominator of this democracy was to be the scientific habit of mind. Knowledge, it was hoped, would be emancipated from the individual knowers. Instead of the vagaries of thought by which the privileged few stumbled upon intuitions of truth, there was to be a prescribed logic of inquiry by which all rational and conscientious men could collectively arrive at this truth. The operations of the mind were to become as simple, unambiguous, and anonymous as the operations of the ballot. Having come this far in revolutionizing knowledge, it was not long before men more enthusiastic than Mill were claiming for their new science not only the superiority of quantity but also the superiority of quality. The boldest of all, Auguste Comte, divided the history of humanity into three stages, of which the first two, the theological and metaphysical, were sunk in myth, legend, and superstition, and only the third, the "positive age," could aspire to "positive knowledge."

For a century or so now we have been living under the new dispensation. Earnest men have favored us with manifestoes and programs for the dissemination of scientific methods, and scores of monographs have labored to apply these methods to the study of man as a political and social animal. There is an even greater abundance of reason abroad than Mill would have thought possible. And in the opinion of some, it is of far poorer quality than Mill could have suspected.

Distressed by the excessive quantity and too often inferior quality of modern political and moral thought, a group of malcontents has taken refuge in the metaphysics of the past. The old orthodoxy has become the new heresy, claiming, as do all heresies, to liberate men from the shackles of dogma—this time the dogma that only through science or democracy,

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FROM the heavy volume of writings on political theory published in recent months, GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB selects for discussion a number of books which represent two extreme—and influential—approaches to the problems of politics: the approach of the political philosopher and that of the political scientist. The clash between these two views is evident in one form or another in all current discussions of the nature of politics. Miss Himmelfarb is the editor of *Essays on Freedom and Power* by Lord Acton, and the author of a study of Lord Acton to be published this fall by the University of Chicago Press. She holds a PhD from the University of Chicago.

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or a combination of the two, can men arrive at the truth. No anonymous or collective enterprises, say the heretics, can compensate for the individual genius of old, and no amount of methodical workmanship can substitute for wisdom, inspiration, and insight. Like most heretics, these invoke the authority of the past to discredit the present. A new "Battle of the Books" is under way, with the "moderns" representing science and the "ancients" classical philosophy. If the new heretics, the "ancients," sometimes seem to be as dogmatic and unyielding as their opponents, that is the nature of heresy. There is a third party, committed to the extravagancies of neither sect, which agrees with the heretics, however, that much of what passes for modern enlightenment is superstition and much of what passes for ancient superstition is wisdom.

IN POLITICAL theory especially, the lines between ancients and moderns, between philosophers and scientists, are sharply drawn. Political theory has suffered in recent years the same fate as the other social sciences: a plethora of writing and a paucity of imagination. It is significant that what imagination there is has been expended upon that discipline which is closest to the heart of the ancients—the discipline of exegesis. Perhaps the wisest and most penetrating among contemporary political philosophers is Professor Leo Strauss of the University of Chicago, author of *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes* (Oxford University Press, 1936); *On Tyranny: An Interpretation of Xenophon's Hiero* (Political Science Classics, New York, 1948; reprinted by Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1950); the Walgreen Lectures on "Natural Law" (to be published by the University of Chicago Press this year, and of which a chapter has appeared in the *Review of Politics,* October 1950); and essays on Spinoza, Rousseau, and medieval Hebrew thought. Educated in Germany, Strauss has brought to political philosophy a training acquired in the study of the Greek and Hebrew classics. He reads his classical texts closely and precisely, as do the philologist and the Talmudist. And he respects his texts as few moderns do.

Most exegeses today are written by men who look down upon the foibles of the past from the superior vantage of the present, and tolerantly (sometimes not so tolerantly) explain, so as to explain away, the philosophy of a thinker by reference to the political quarrels of his time, the domestic arrangements of his household, or the private complexes of his psyche. This is not Strauss's way. On the assumption that great minds—in this lies their greatness—transcend these ephemera, Strauss attends to nothing but their ideas. Great minds are great for all time, not only for their own time. And the basic categories of political thought, like greatness of mind, are immutable. Natural right, or justice, does not change its character just because, as the historicists seem to think, men's opinions about it have changed. Truth does not change; only beliefs do. "Philosophizing," Strauss says, "means to ascend from the cave to the light of the sun, that is, to the truth." The truths contemplated by a Plato are worthy of contemplation by us.

No sociologist or psychoanalyst, Strauss can only hope to understand the philosopher the way the philosopher understood himself. If Xenophon (in common with other philosophers of antiquity) was much preoccupied with the question, "Is the tyrant happy?"—Strauss must assume that the question is significant even if it sounds puerile to the modern ear. He finds, in fact, in that one modest, homely question, overtones of the perennial questions of philosophy: the nature of man and his happiness, pleasure and virtue, morality and nature, justice and power, private and public morality, the natural and the best state, piety and law, the ruler and the ruled. Without bombast or professional obscurantism, Strauss pursues the common-sense inquiries of Xenophon: If the tyrant must fear assassination, how can he be happy? If he is unhappy, why does he not retire from public office? If he needs power only in order to be secure, how can he be said to be secure when he is in danger of death? If he seeks only sensual gratification, could he not better achieve this in private life? To answer these questions, it turns out, is to answer some of the most important questions of political philosophy.

It is no simple task to understand the philosopher as he understood himself, for Strauss has found that one of the obligations of the philosophical enterprise is the occasional veiling, often at critical points, of the real meaning or significance of an idea. There appears to be a body of private, esoteric teachings in most great philosophers that is available only to the prudent disciple and that is concealed from the irresponsible public. When Xenophon seems to be arguing for tyranny, that may be

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only a device by which to establish the case for law and legitimacy. When Maimonides takes pains to argue for the scrupulous observance of ritual and law, it is perhaps an intimation that ritual and law must be observed even when they cannot be believed. The assumption is that nothing in the text is said or left unsaid heedlessly. Strauss himself, in the style of great philosophy, writes deliberately and precisely, so deliberately that one must read him as carefully as he would have us read others. (So deliberately, too, that one might almost suspect him of harboring esoteric theories of his own. "I have not dotted all the *i*'s," he hints in the interpretation of Xenophon.)

One of Strauss's main services to political philosophy has been pedagogic. He has taught students to take the great thinkers of the past seriously. And he has taught them that exegesis, which is the greatest compliment one philosopher can pay another, can be more productive of insights than the speculations of those who feel that the fact of their having come late into this world gives them an advantage over all those who preceded them. "It goes without saying," Strauss writes, "that I never believed that my mind was moving in a larger 'circle of ideas' than Xenophon's mind." That it can move so freely within that circle of ideas is praise enough for any man. The commentator, in the Hebrew tradition, is the philosopher par excellence, and so it is with Strauss.

A more conventional work in exegesis is that of a colleague of Strauss's at the University of Chicago, Professor David Grene, who recently published a study of the political philosophy of Thucydides and Plato under the title of *Man in His Pride* (University of Chicago Press, 1950). Grene's is more a historical than textual analysis. Both Thucydides and Plato, in his account, are decidedly men of their time. In the case of Thucydides, this is no more than natural. The Peloponnesian War was not only the substance of his life; it was also the subject matter of his thought. That Plato's experience in Sicily, his attempt to make of a king a philosopher, was equally relevant to his philosophy is less obvious. It may be objected that it was not the exigencies of the situation in Sicily that determined Plato's philosophy but rather his philosophy that determined the course of the experiment in Sicily. Just this superiority of philosophy to history is what is commonly implied by Platonism.

If Grene's method is historical, however, his motive is always philosophical. The historian, Thucydides, must qualify as a philosopher to capture Grene's interest. The theme of his book is that Thucydides at the one end and Plato at the other represent the limits of the movement of political philosophy in the West. At opposite reaches of the mind, they have sought answers to the fundamental questions of political philosophy: What is the natural, or best, political order? How can political power be justified?

The standard interpretation of Plato has the philosopher starting as a mystic and visionary and ending up as a practical man of politics, or even a scientist. With this interpretation, Grene takes issue. In his view, Plato became not less but more mystical in his later years, more intent upon the ideal, which was the real, world of form and order concealed behind the world of the senses, and more convinced than ever that politics without philosophy was meaningless, that power without justice was intolerable. As an old man, Plato set down an account of his youthful enthusiasm for political reform and his eventual disillusionment: "At last I saw that as far as all states now existing are concerned, they are all badly governed. For the condition of their laws is bad almost past cure, except for some miraculous accident. So I was compelled to say, in praising true philosophy, that it was from it alone that one was able to discern all true justice, public and private. And so I said that the nations of men will never cease from trouble until either the true and genuine breed of philosophers shall come to political office or until . . . the rulers in the states shall by some divine ordinance take to the true pursuit of philosophy."

As Socrates was, for Plato, the archetype of the philosopher, the model of justice and wisdom, so Socrates' conviction and sentence to death by Athens was taken by him as evidence of the radical evil and injustice of the state. In memory of Socrates, and to avenge his death, he dedicated himself to the philosopher's quest for justice, wisdom, and truth. A man might choose to keep quiet and mind his own business, content to live a gracious life, careful to commit neither impiety nor injustice in a world that is both impious and unjust. This, Plato admits, would be no small achieve-

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ment. For the philosopher, however, it is not enough. He must seek the ideal both on his own account and on that of society, "for in the state that fits him he himself will attain greater proportions and along with his private salvation will save the community as well." The philosopher, Plato seems to be saying, cannot see justice clearly if he does not see himself as the ruler of the state. Even if the idea of the philosopher-king is impractical as a concrete, political goal, it may be the only way to arrive at the ideas of truth and justice.

THUCYDIDES was concerned with the same problems of justice and power as his contemporary, Plato, but where Plato saw in the state justice "writ large," Thucydides saw only power. It was his purpose to assuage the conscience of Athens—not for the death of Socrates (which may have occurred only after Thucydides' own death), but for that other trial of conscience to which Athens was subjected, the Peloponnesian War.

The material of Thucydides' history is, to a remarkable extent, the material of present-day history. When Athens and Sparta, the freemen of Greece, together defeated the superior military forces of Persian despotism, Greece took its victory as the proper reward of justice. Succeeding events, however, shocked the Greek sense of moral propriety. The allies fell out, each coveting the other's empire, and within the memory of living men, the struggle for freedom became a cynical struggle for power. Unlike previous and later empires, Athens scorned to resort to the dubious sanction of religion or a hypocritical concern for the welfare of its subjects. The strategy of Thucydides, Athens' advocate both against its enemies abroad and dissidents at home, was to defend imperialism as the normal and natural behavior of states. "No one can be blamed," he has the Athenian envoys to Sparta say, shortly before the outbreak of the war, "with matters of the greatest consequence at stake, for disposing of the risks to his own best advantage." No nation is deterred, by the argument of justice, from pursuing its best interest, if it has the power to obtain that interest. The established rule of politics is that the liberty of the weaker is curtailed by the power of the stronger. Men rule whatever they can master. "We have not laid down this law nor were we the first to follow it when laid down; we but took it over, followed it, and will leave it after us, a thing already existing and destined to exist forever."

Athens and Thucydides between them taught the world to regard power not as a means but as an end. As long as human nature remained the same, and there was every reason to suppose it would, men would lust after power for no better motive than the desire for power. Since this was the natural state of affairs, Thucydides concluded that it would be futile to will it otherwise. "Justice" was only one of the many "fair words" with which men adorned their speech, attempting to deceive the weak and stupid. Morality was but another name for the conventions which keep a society in order.

YET even Thucydides, the progenitor of Machiavelli and Hobbes, made his obeisance, after a fashion, to justice and morality. The Athenian envoys, arguing their case by proxy of the historian, contradict themselves by claiming first that they behaved exactly as any other people would have in a similar situation, and then that they had behaved better than the others: "Those deserve praise who, while following the dictates of man's nature and ruling others, still prove juster than their own strength would warrant. At least, we think that if others took over our empire, they would have proved conclusively how moderate we are; yet in our case, thanks to our decent behavior, we have got a bad name rather than a good one, and this is most unreasonable." In a few instances—for example, when describing the barbarous murder of the entire population of one small town—Thucydides permits himself the rare luxury of indulging in moral indignation: this is because evil was done wantonly, beyond the needs of the situation. When men are wicked by choice, Thucydides admits that moral comment is in order.

It is sometimes enough, particularly in the controversy between states (for "Athens vs. Sparta" one may read "America vs. Russia"), to put the moral argument in its most modest form, as Thucydides did: we have only done what had to be done; we have not killed as barbarians but as soldiers. Yet the concession to justice was greater than Thucydides intended. In denying that empires are governed by justice, he unwittingly affirmed the reality of something called justice, even though it is more often conspicuous by its absence than by its presence. For over two thousand years,

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if Athens and Thucydides be taken as the founders of "political realism," nations have violated every precept of justice, and there have been those who have solemnly read the idea out of existence. Yet neither the testimony of our senses nor the reasoning of our betters has succeeded in eliminating the consciousness of justice (and injustice) from our minds, or even in removing it from the highest position in political and moral philosophy. "The extraordinary feature of the Athenian empire," Grene observes, "is that the Athenians built it with nothing to stand between themselves and the suffering and injustice they caused; that they faced it all together, every one of them, in individual moral responsibility all the time." "Suffering," "injustice," "moral responsibility"—this may be at the opposite moral pole from Plato, but it is assuredly within the same universe of philosophical discourse.

In a totally different universe of discourse is the kind of political thought to which the "moderns" are partial and which is currently known as political science. Political science is not content merely to give novel answers to the traditional problems of political philosophy. It denies the meaningfulness of the questions themselves. In keeping with the professions of "positive" science, it refuses to be distracted, by metaphysical and moral speculations, from the only meaningful task: the creation of an empirically grounded, scientific system of politics.

Between Thucydides and the political scientist there are obvious points of resemblance. Both pride themselves on their hard-headed, realistic confrontation of the facts of political life. Both see in power the basic, sometimes the only, fact of politics. Yet Thucydides is within the tradition of political philosophy while political science remains stubbornly outside of it. For Thucydides, the drama of politics comes from the necessity to be immoral. No matter how often justice is defeated, or how predictable its defeat may be, it is always a contender in the political arena; it exists to try men's consciences and provide the plots for tragedy. The political scientist, on the other hand, would like to know nothing of conscience or tragedy. To him, justice regarded as a moral abstraction or absolute is often little more than a feeble memory left over from the pre-scientific age of myths and heroes. Again, for Thucydides, the facts of life are hard, ineluctable, and man is a prisoner both of nature and history. The political scientist, generally an optimist by temperament, regards man as a plastic creature able to do with himself what he would, and history as a bad dream which daylight brings to an end.

The most recent and most ambitious product of political science, *Power and Society* (Yale University Press, 1950), is the work of two of the ablest men in the field. Harold D. Lasswell of Yale is generally acknowledged to be the dean of political science in America, and Abraham Kaplan, a young philosopher now at the University of California, is a distinguished student of Rudolf Carnap, the logical positivist. As might be expected from such a collaboration, the book opens with a statement of the difference between political science and political philosophy. (Like much writing influenced by semantics and symbolic logic, this volume numbers the sub-sections within the chapters, and it is disconcerting to find that the discussion of philosophy and science, contained in the introduction, bears the humble tag "0.1.") Formally, political philosophy is taken to include the two categories of political science and political doctrine, political science being concerned with what is, political doctrine with what ought to be. In fact, however, throughout the book political philosophy is generally used as a synonym for political doctrine and in contradistinction to political science. Their own work Lasswell and Kaplan describe as falling exclusively within the province of science.

There is more, however, intended in this than a staking out of conflicting claims. Lasswell and Kaplan are less concerned with limiting their own sphere of operations than with eliminating their competitors. After amiably assigning boundaries to science and philosophy, they proceed to cut the ground out from under the feet of philosophy. The practice of political philosophy, it becomes apparent, is regarded as a not quite legitimate enterprise in this advanced age. Theories of "what ought to be," of the "right, good, and proper," are deemed to be somewhat disreputable, and not at all a seemly preoccupation for the serious thinker. To Lasswell and Kaplan, theories of this sort are merely the expressions of men's prejudices and preferences; they are ideologies intended to legitimize and justify political power

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in the eyes of the world, to act as a convenient façade behind which the realities of power can function undisturbed. The scientist, dispassionately observing the ways of men, uses these philosophies as empirical case studies of what men believe, or think they believe. The philosophical doctrines of Plato, then, are of no more permanent validity and objective significance than the religious rites of the Australian aborigines or the voting habits of American citizens. Philosophy is informative the way lies are informative, not the way truths are; it tells the scientist something about the pathology of the philosopher, but nothing about the objective nature of reality.

It is in keeping with this conception of science that Lasswell and Kaplan take, as the subject matter of their study, the composition and distribution of "values"—values being understood in their sociological sense, as the wealth, power, and prestige which men in a given society happen to seek. These values are alone deemed to be real. They can be touched, measured, tested, assigned numerical quantities, and arranged in charts and graphs. The values of the philosopher, such as wisdom, truth, and justice, do not enter into the calculations of the scientist. Whether the good, the true, and the just are, as a previous work of Lasswell's had it,* symbols of "ego insecurity" by means of which the individual "concentrates and removes his tensions," or, as the present work maintains, the rationalizations that induce men to submit to authority, they are evasive and unsatisfactory compared with the tangibles of wealth, power, and prestige.

THERE would be little point in quarreling with political science, as Lasswell and Kaplan understand it, were it not that science, in their sense, is inimical to philosophy, in Strauss's sense. This is not true of all brands of political science. There is a variety of political science, less enterprising and more humble than that of Lasswell and Kaplan, which is frankly, exclusively empirical. The experts in public administration, voting behavior, and the structure of legislation perform a valuable function in amassing facts about the mundane workings of politics. Political philosophy does not deny the legitimacy of this order of political science; nor does this political science infringe upon the domain of philosophy. To accredit the study of urban and rural differences regarding party affiliation, pressure groups, or political influence is not to discredit the study of the nature of justice in the state or the relation between private and public morality.

Lasswell and Kaplan, however, scorn to be mere collators of facts. On the contrary, against the "brute empiricists," they oppose a loftier conception of political science: "Of themselves, of course, 'facts' are mere collections of details; they are significant only as data for hypotheses." These hypotheses are intended to elucidate the basic concepts, processes, and activities implicit in the logic of political science. This too might be a legitimate conception of political science and need not necessarily interfere with the inquiries of political philosophy. It only becomes a challenge to philosophy when, as in the work of Lasswell and Kaplan, the hypotheses they formulate deny to the concepts of philosophy the status of objective reality: when the concept of power is treated as objective reality but the concept of justice is not, when "interests" are deemed a satisfactory tool of political analysis and "morals" are not.

Science, we are often told, is willing to sacrifice all of the amenities of civilization—sentiment, style, and moral indignation—upon the altar of truth. Truth is indeed worthy of the greatest sacrifices; but it would be tragic were the sacrifice to be in vain, were it to prove that what is sacrificed is truth itself. Consider the dilemma of the political scientist who has engaged to analyze the most important phenomenon of our time, the concentration camp. Presumably, he would have to refrain from such obvious expressions of judgment as cruelty, inhumanity, barbarousness, savagery, horror, atrocity, ignominy, degradation. Yet not to use these words, or their moral equivalents, would be to ignore the most important facts about the camps and to miss their significance in human history. To think of them in the judicial manner prescribed by political science is to think of them as the Nazis did. There could be no greater perversion of truth.

Lasswell and Kaplan seem determined to spurn every amenity of civilization. They take nothing on faith, neither facts, nor words, nor

*_World Politics and Personal Insecurity_, originally published in 1934, and reprinted, together with works by Charles E. Merriam and T. V. Smith, under the title _A Study of Power_, Free Press, Glencoe, Ill., 1950. Three other works of Lasswell have been republished by the Free Press in _The Political Writings of Harold D. Lasswell_ (1951).

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the meaning of words. With a clean slate and an open mind, they undertake to build up a system of political science. Their method consists in the definition of concepts and in the statement of propositions ("empirical hypotheses") about these concepts. Some key concepts the authors regret having to leave undefined, on the plea that concepts can only be defined in terms of other concepts and that the circularity of this process must be broken at some point. They reason: "In most cases, of course, we assume that undefined terms will be understood in the sense intended." This assumption, common to all normal prose writing, the authors all too infrequently put to use. The embarrassing fact is that it is not the undefined terms but the defined ones that give the reader difficulty, and often not so much the terms themselves as the definitions. The way to systematize, it is presumed, is to be abstract, and the way to be abstract is to replace all verbs by nouns. A passage such as the following may, if read repeatedly and patiently, offer some meaning: "From the conception of value in terms of an *act* [authors' italics] of valuing, it follows that values are conflicting, facilitative, or compatible according as the acts of valuation are such. Conflict and facilitation of values are not deducible from incompatibilities or consonance of symbolizations, but depend on the relations of the acts in which the valuations consist. Agreement or divergence in professed aims, for example, is not determinative (and often not even a reliable index) of facilitation or conflict of the relevant values." Having read this, and then reread it, it does not help much to go back to the previous page where value is defined as "a desired event, a goal event," and "valuation" as "the act of valuing." And it comes as an anticlimax to realize that after all these laborious distinctions, the authors themselves redundantly speak of "acts of valuation." (Or can they mean by this "acts of the act of valuing"?)

IN ACADEMIC, as in scientific, society, there is a tradition that to criticize a man's style is somehow not fair play. The fifth freedom seems to be the right to write badly. Yet when a man not only writes badly but also prescribes his mode of writing as the only one proper to serious political analysis, then others can surely protest. It is a matter of dispute whether the scorned terms of philosophy, such as "soul," "spirit," or "idea," are any more trivial or meaningless than "the principle of configurative analysis," which grammatically implies analysis *by* configuration, but may be intended to mean analysis *of* configurations. (And what is so unique about this kind of analysis?) It is also questionable whether they are any more spurious than such a term as "tension level," which carries an exciting air of scientific precision and novelty entirely lacking in its exact equivalent, "the level of tension." (The authors do not pretend to assign a definite numerical quantity to any particular "tension level," although they admit that if it is to be useful there should be a set of "empirical indices" which would relate the term to the "experiential situation." Unfortunately, the social sciences are characterized by "index instability," which makes it impossible to "metricize" or "quantify" hypotheses. They are further incapacitated, it would seem, by "the principle of situational reference," which provides that every generalization be restricted to "specified social conditions.") Nor does the capitalization of nouns, for which German philosophy has been so heartily rebuked, deface the printed page more than the italicization of words and whole sentences, as if the words themselves cannot be trusted to convey the whole meaning, and as if commonplaces are thereby transmuted into profundities: "*Control of the key values* [power, wealth, etc.] *exercises a stronger determinative effect upon the control of all values than is exerted by the control of nonkey values.*" (And what is a "determinative effect" other than an effect?)

At one point in their book, Lasswell and Kaplan rate some of the classics of political thought according to the proportion of philosophy (judgments and evaluations) and science (facts and empirical hypotheses) in a sample of their pages: Aristotle's *Politics* yields the ratio of 25 to 75; Rousseau's *Social Contract* 45 to 55; Laski's *Grammar of Politics*, 20 to 80; and Machiavelli's *Prince*, 0 to 100. Machiavelli, if this sample is trustworthy, approximates the authors' ideal of political science. Yet it should be observed that Machiavelli achieved this distinction without mincing words; vanity and greed are vanity and greed in his pages, not, as Lasswell and Kaplan might have put it, a governing propensity and pattern of demands for the gratification of the system of interests of the ego. (To Lasswell and Kaplan, vanity and greed are hardly proper subjects for definition, so that I have been

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obliged to use here a telescoped version of their definition of "interest.") More important is the fact that when Machiavelli calmly read morality out of political thought he read immorality into it. Politics, to be sure, was no more corrupt after Machiavelli than before. What seems to have become corrupted was political thought, which now knew more, perhaps, about the corruptness of politics but no longer knew how to speak out against it.

FORTUNATELY, men, even political scientists, are generally less corrupt than their theories would make them. After all their warnings against the "normatively ambiguous" statements in which judgment creeps in to contaminate the purity of science, the authors themselves succumb to the human weakness of ambiguity. "Our own values," they confess, "are those of the citizen of a society that aspires toward freedom. Hence we have given special attention to the formulation of conditions favorable to the establishment and continuance of a free society." They hasten to add, however, that they are "not concerned with the justification of democratic values, their derivation from some metaphysical or moral base." Although it is hard to conceive of anything more important for the establishment and continuance of a free society than the moral and metaphysical justification of democratic values, it is nevertheless interesting to watch political science confronting, even on its own terms, the problem of freedom.

However valiantly the authors labor to treat democracy and liberty with the same obtuse impartiality accorded to all other concepts, their moral instincts get the better of them. When that happens, all caution goes by the board. Essential distinctions are blurred, previous hypotheses are forgotten, and the authors deliver themselves of a message of optimism regarding the viability of democracy that is suspiciously akin to a declaration of faith. Although liberty, democracy, commonwealth, republic, and juridical rule are all separately defined, they are not adequately distinguished one from the other. Liberty is associated with democracy, democracy with liberty, and all good things with all other good things in such a way that the identity of each is lost in a haze of congeniality. The great insight of political philosophy and the experience of history, that liberty can be aristocratic and democracy despotic, is forgotten in the desire to claim both liberty and democracy for their side. The concept of elites and power groups, which was their mainstay through two hundred pages of tortuous text and ingenious charts, deserts them at the end, and nowhere is democracy made to cope with what they themselves regard as the elementary facts of politics. Instead, the authors make shift with such dubious hypotheses as that "the stability of democratic rule varies with the degree of politicization of conduct," and "disinterest in political relations and practices is an abdication of self-responsibility." Even if one takes "disinterest" to mean lack of interest, and not impartiality, the fact remains that it is not democracy but Nazism and Communism that require the more highly politicized public. Since totalitarianism is literally the attempt to engage the total sentiments of the people, it is in Russia (as in Nazi Germany) that political apathy is a crime against the state; in England and America it is, as often as not, a convenience.

The attempt to construct a scientific system out of the materials of platitudes may be more than a minor misfortune. In the concern with categories and principles that have no better reason for existence than the artificial requirements of a system or the horizontal and vertical blanks created by a chart, the most obvious facts of common sense and common observation may escape.

Auguste Comte, while composing his great work on "social physics," deliberately abstained from reading anything at all—journals, newspapers, scientific or philosophical treatises—that might bear on his *Positive Philosophy*. This "cerebral hygiene," as he called it, has apparently passed on to his descendants.

This is a strange way to court knowledge. There is something truly perverse in the distrust of the learning and experience of others. That all of past mankind should be regarded as benighted is strange enough, but stranger still is the apparent conviction that one or even a few men can do what the collective wisdom of centuries could not.

In the first great "Battle of the Books," in the 17th century, the moderns claimed to see further than the ancients only by virtue of standing on the shoulders of the ancients. The moderns of today spurn such artificial aids. Raising themselves by their own bootstraps, they hope to tower above many centuries of thinking men.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

The Tune of "Hatikvah"

To the Editor of Commentary:

Will you give me the opportunity of saying the last word on the "tune of uncertain origin," "to which the words of 'Hatikvah' were written"? It is time that the ever multiplying theories and guesses were discarded and the facts recorded.

Imber wrote the poem "Hatikvah" without any melody in mind; the melody was adapted to it later.

In the year 1857, Emanuel Aguilar and my grandfather, D. A. de Sola, published in London a volume of "The Ancient Melodies of the Liturgy of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews." With the exception of one composition by D. A. de Sola, every melody in that collection was traditional in the Amsterdam and London Sephardic communities, and in the related historic New York Sephardic Congregation Shearith Israel. In his introduction to the volume, Mr. de Sola wrote that "no melody has been inserted in this collection which is not, as far as I have been able to investigate, at least a century and a half old."

If anyone will take the trouble to consult this book and turn to the melody for Hallel given in selection 42 on page 39, he will find there the "Hatikvah" melody.

Towards the end of the 19th century there was living in North London the Reverend Mr. Perlzweig. From his contacts with members of the Sephardic congregation in Mildmay Park in North London he picked up that melody. More than half a century ago he took the tune and with very slight modifications required to adapt it to the length of the verse of "Hatikvah," he put the words of Imber's poem to this traditional Sephardic Hallel melody. Virtual identity of the characteristic sequence of the notes and of the two contrasting musical themes of that Sephardic Hallel and of the "Hatikvah" tune is inescapably evident from the printed page.

In the face of these facts, there is no need to try to trace the origin of the "Hatikvah" chant to a similarity in a casual musical phrase in "Hatikvah" and some Eastern European folk song preserved in popular memory.

The world is still strangely ignorant of the facts, but there is no room for doubt as to the origin of the tune to which "Hatikvah" is sung.

Rabbi D. de Sola Pool
The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue
New York City

Lament for the Bagel

To the Editor of Commentary:

When Irving Pfefferblit ("The Bagel," May 1951) says: "The country presents the aspect of a desert whose bagel-making oases are few and pitifully far between," he is quite unaware of the more awful situation that exists.

What has happened is that the authentic bagel is all but forgotten in the hinterlands and in its place and under its name is sold a soft, semi-glazed quasi-circle without a well-defined hole and which—even worse—has never seen or touched boiling water. To make the matter even more tragic—you can buy "bagels" in cellophane bags put up to "brown-and-serve."

Aych naf'lu ha-bagolim—"How have the bagels fallen!"

Rabbi Lou H. Silberman
Temple Israel
Omaha, Nebraska

Note on Rabbi Breuer

To the Editor of Commentary:

There is a small factual error in "Washington Heights: The Fourth Reich" (June 1951). You say Rabbi Breuer "headed the great Orthodox congregation in Frankfort." He did not; his father did for a time, and after his father's death, Rabbi J. Horowitz headed the leading Orthodox congregation in Frankfort. The present Rabbi Breuer headed the smaller Klaus Synagogue, and was also the principal of the Frankfort Yeshiva.

Robert J. Aumann
Brooklyn, New York

The Permanent Bar Mitzvah

To the Editor of Commentary:

Dr. Gaster's proposal ("What Does the Bar Mitzvah Signify?" June 1951) that our present preparation for the Bar Mitzvah ceremony become the basis of a graduated Jewish educa-

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tional system . . . is both sound and stimulating. Those who may think the program somewhat messianic should be led to an article written by Rabbi Rudin of Temple Beth-El, Great Neck, New York, and published in the December 1950 issue of the *Synagogue Service Bulletin* of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

This article describes the course of study which eight adult men pursued. While it is true that these men had never been Bar Mitzvah and were motivated to Jewish study to fulfill this longing, what is perhaps more significant is the fact that "they agreed unanimously to continue their studies." Thus it does seem possible that American Israel might set up an educational system with milestones along the way to mark one's degree of knowledge. . . .

RABBI SIDNEY I. GOLDSTEIN
Temple Hesed Abraham
Jamestown, New York

Science and Pseudo-Science

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found Robert Davis's study of the Soviet conception of man ("The Mind of Man—Soviet View," May 1951) penetrating and imaginative. I read it not only as an informative description and critique of pseudo-science in Russia, but as a caveat to those of us at home who, like myself, teach courses in "Personality and Culture." However remote we are from the wooden categories of Soviet Russia, I suppose that much of the effort to grasp human nature through social institutions exposes itself to similar, if less simplistic and more subtle, hazards. Fortunately we're still in a position to avoid those hazards; and in general I think that your magazine does a good job of protecting the individual against pseudo-science without undermining the valid efforts of social science to "explain" him.

HELEN SULLUNIE MINS
Chicago, Illinois

Pound, Poetry, and Politics

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his article in your April issue, "Pure Poetry, Impure Politics, and Ezra Pound," Peter Viereck has combined a number of rhetorical ingredients to produce what seems to me a very queer hybrid of sense and nonsense. Before discussing what in the piece seems novel and worth discussing, let me list the points where only simple agreement or disagreement is required.

First of all, the racial business. It is there in Pound, is abominable and perhaps technically pathological, but is not the "subject" of any of the Cantos nor does it occupy more than eight lines at the most. Secondly, it is true that Pound admired Mussolini and felt himself in a sense a partisan of the Axis against the English Tory class. But failures of prudence and patriotism as these judgments were, and perhaps even failures of humanity, they were not fascist opinions in the usual sense, but a very personal and selective Jacobin mixture in the tradition of Thoreau, Ruskin, Morris, Landor, and Douglas, with a somewhat jejune American admixture of efficiency-worship and a salting of literary Confucianism. The notion that the Bollingen award was a sort of racist-reactionary collusion has been sufficiently examined and exploded elsewhere. . . .

The main thrust of Mr. Viereck's argument is against that familiar old bogey, "New Critic Formalism," and what it presumably implies of "sectarian literary patronage systems." All the onus of moral and civic malfeasance is laid by Mr. Viereck on those who subscribe to the literary principles promoted by "our Allen Tates," the "stifling Pound-Eliot cult," the "certified pure mandarins of criticism." Now, apart from the petulance in this, which criticizes itself better than I could, the argument seems to rest on the assumption that the familiar old business of art for art's sake—broached by Poe in his essay "The Poetic Principle," agitated in Europe by the Parnassians, Baudelaire, Pater, Symons, the early Yeats, the Symbolists, codified by the Abbé Brémond, and dealt with recently by Robert Penn Warren in his admirable essay (in *The Kenyon Critics*) "Pure and Impure Poetry"—is still a fighting issue. The doctrine of art for art's sake, as Allen Tate has observed, is valid just as far as one has to go in asserting that a good poem is better than a bad poem, there being no limit to how good a poem ought to be, in its own terms. But to suppose that Pound, Eliot, and Allen Tate have been preaching Aestheticism shows a rather astonishing ignorance of their prose and poetry. One would suppose it particularly impossible for large-minded American poets to get away with any such quasi-priestly gospel. Even Poe's more sensational notions about purity and "ideality" in poetry seem to have been polemical feints at the contemporary science maniacs rather than attempts to dodge ethical responsibility or simple human feeling. In a review of Longfellow's poems, he wrote: "We do not mean to say that a didactic moral may not well be made the under-current of a poetical thesis; but that it can never be so obtrusively put forth as in the majority of his compositions. . . ."

It can be shown that Pound was influenced

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by Poe's high standards and by his critical vocabulary, though nobody fought more doggedly against the metrical monotony and false ideality which ruins most of Poe's own verse. Two quotations from Pound's recently published *Letters* somewhat undermine his status as the patron saint of Mr. Viereck's New Aesthetes: "I am perhaps didactic; so in a sense, or in different senses, are Homer, Dante, Villon, and Omar. . . . It is all rubbish to pretend that art isn't didactic. A revelation is always didactic. Only the aesthetes since 1880 have pretended to the contrary, and they aren't a very sturdy lot." Then there is the rhetorical question put to John Crowe Ransom apropos of the founding of *Kenyon Review*: ". . . Are you ready for a revival of American culture, considering it as something specifically grown from the nucleus of the American Founders, present in the Adams, Jefferson correspondence; not limited to belles lettres and American or Colonial imitation of European literary models, but active in all departments of thought, and tackling the problems which gave life to epos and Elizabethan plays, without rendering either Homer or the Bard of Avon dry doctrinaires?"

So we can see that any revival of Aestheticism in the name of Pound (or Eliot, for obvious reasons) must take the name and beliefs of their master in vain. The truth of the matter, it seems plain to me, is that no such revival exists, or would be even conceivable in contemporary America. If we want to take Pound seriously as an ideologue, we must examine the whole range of his thought: his Confucianism, his agrarianism, his belief in "hard" money, his Hellenistic "paganism" with its anti-Old Testament corollary, and all the rest of the strange mixture. . . . His critics forget that he has denominated the "Cambridge English Professor," not the Jew, as "the lowest form of life." I am not trying to extenuate the somewhat forced Menckenesque humor of this, but it is tiresome to raise eyebrows over bits of it out of context. The anti-Semitism seems to be a link with outright madness and paranoia and is hence a powerful object-lesson and witness against itself. . . .

One can only respect the reader for whom Pound's occasional violence and inhumanity destroy all pleasure in the verse. But to admit all of this is not to follow Mr. Viereck in his larger attacks on a body of criticism as various as the times themselves are various, nor to feel that his "third force" presents a very fresh or urgent alternative. Mr. Viereck is an entertaining and skillful poet and doesn't really need so exclusive a lien on virtue.

R. W. FLINT

Pigeon Cove, Massachusetts

Dr. Atkinson Demurs

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I have followed the course of COMMENTARY ever since its first issue and have been very much impressed with the wide field covered, and the courage with which you have set forth your views.

I strongly believe in a free press. I also believe that the only criterion that can be safely used in judging any writing is the motive of the author and his treatment of salient facts. This statement, I think, cannot be successfully contradicted. Based on this conviction, I want to file a protest against the publication of an article in the April issue by Granville Hicks, "The Liberals Who Haven't Learned."

I think everyone will grant the right of free choice by the editor and his board to determine what is to be printed. On the other hand, it is only fair that an article which so flagrantly distorts the truth and draws such unwarranted conclusions should be challenged, for the article—both in its content and conclusions—seems to be a calculated smear of the *Nation*, its editor, and publisher. This smear is based on quotations deliberately drawn out of context and in total disregard of the actual week-by-week views of the *Nation* on the Korean situation.

The article is written by a man who, for a number of years, was a member of the Communist party, a leading spokesman, and editor of the *New Masses* when it was controlled by the Communist party of the United States. These facts the editors of COMMENTARY apparently chose to ignore in their biographical sketch of the author. Mr. Hicks is one of a large number of "reformed Communists"; and of course it is nothing against him that he has seen the errors of his way and repented. But, at the same time, it is only fair to ask, why should so many Communists who, like him, have recanted, now attempt to censor the utterances of those who have never shared their beliefs in Communism and cannot now share their fanatical hatreds? As a matter of fact, there are multitudes of loyal citizens, firmly believing in democracy, who still think that every effort should be made to achieve peace by negotiation without appeasement and without sacrificing democratic principles. To call those who hold this opinion "dangerous citizens" is as grotesque as it is unfair. I have known intimately for many years the people who are responsible for editing the *Nation*. Miss Kirchwey and Mr. del Vayo and their associates are honorable, intelligent, trustworthy, and above suspicion in thought and action. All of them feel, as millions of others

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do, that a world war at this time would be the final calamity of our generation and should be avoided if at all possible.

No INSTITUTION has more consistently fought bigotry and fought to enlarge the area of human freedom in accord with the highest concepts of dynamic democracy than the *Nation*. I cannot believe that the editor of COMMENTARY is unaware of that record. That is why it is hard to understand what motivated acceptance of this article by Mr. Hicks, in which he implies through direct misstatement and calculated omissions that the *Nation*, if not subversive, is dangerous.

A careful reading of the article indicates that the writer is fully aware of the danger he faces in making unwarranted charges, and so he uses the well-known technique of skilled, trained Communist leaders of "playing both sides of the street" at the same time. For example, Mr. Hicks says: "However paradoxical it appears, the magazine that calls itself 'America's leading liberal weekly since 1865,' however noble its intention, in some sense serves today as an apologist for Soviet Russia. To some extent, no doubt, this is a matter of individual viewpoints. . . ." (Note "in some sense" and "to some extent" both used in the same paragraph.)

Whether or not COMMENTARY or the American Jewish Committee agreed to have this article printed in the Congressional Record is a matter of small importance. However, the fact that the article was commended by Congressman Dondero, of Michigan, gives to it a quasi-authority and approval. What is of importance is the fact that COMMENTARY should be publishing any material that could be valuable ammunition in the hands of zealots in their war against democracy and those who hold to the democratic way of life.

HENRY A. ATKINSON
The Church Peace Union
New York City

Mr. Hicks Replies

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The prolonged and ominous tension in the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union has produced at least two kinds of hysteria. One is easy to identify—the neurotic fear of Communism that is being used so effectively by demagogues for their own reactionary purposes. The second, less generally recognized type takes the form of a hysteria about hysteria. It is as pathological as its counterpart, and probably almost as dangerous. Victims of either type are characterized by their inability to confront the by no means pleasant realities of the contemporary situation.

Because his letter is so vulgarly abusive, so empty of argument, so far from being either peaceful or churchly, I can only suppose that Mr. Atkinson is suffering from the second type of hysteria. If I did not think so, I might be tempted to follow Miss Kirchwey's example and tell you that I would sue you and Mr. Atkinson for libel if you published it, for this angry talk about "a calculated smear" and "direct misstatement and calculated omissions" goes some distance beyond what I am inclined to take, even from a distinguished churchman. To be quite serious, the letter would deserve nothing but contemptuous silence if it were not a symptomatic document.

PERHAPS the key to the neurotic quality of the letter lies in Mr. Atkinson's insistence on finding a secret (and discreditable) motive for my having written the article. That I said what I did about the *Nation* because I believed it to be true is a notion he will not entertain for a moment. A less hysterical person, even if he disagreed just as strongly with my views, would at least consider the possibility that I was honestly mistaken, but Mr. Atkinson is sure that I wrote "a calculated smear"—for obscure and sinister reasons.

It therefore follows that COMMENTARY had obscure and sinister reasons for concealing—"apparently chose to ignore" is his phrase—my Communist record. That record, I must repeat, was never a secret. I was openly a member of the Communist party, and my resignation therefrom was public. As a matter of fact, I discussed some of my own problems and the problems of ex-Communists in general in a review of *The God That Failed* that appeared in COMMENTARY just a little more than a year ago. I am sure, whatever Mr. Atkinson thinks, that you didn't intend to hide anything from your readers and in any case didn't succeed in doing so.

But probably neither you nor I feel so strongly about "reformed Communists"—both the phrase and the quotation marks are his—as Mr. Atkinson does. From his point of view, many of them are dangerous persons who "attempt to censor the utterances of those who have never shared their belief in Communism and cannot now share their fanatical hatreds." I take it that he means to include me in that group, for otherwise the observation would scarcely be relevant. Let me remind him, then, that I did not suggest in my article that anybody's utterances should be censored. The difference between saying a person's opinions are wrong and saying they should be sup-

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pressed is a crucial distinction for democracy, but apparently Mr. Atkinson is incapable of recognizing it.

Furthermore, I am not aware of harboring "fanatical hatreds," and I doubt if anyone can discover evidence of such emotions in my record. I have been a "reformed Communist" for twelve years, just three times as long as I was a member of the party. During those twelve years I have published a dozen or so articles on Communism—at least one of them in the *Nation*. They have been critical of Communism, but I defy anyone to find as much "fanatical hatred" in all of them put together as can be found in Mr. Atkinson's letter. That I am an anti-Communist goes without saying. As I pointed out in my article, the nature of Communism is such that anyone who understands it must be either for or against: no neutrality is possible. But opposition is not, in my vocabulary, synonymous with "fanatical hatred" —a fact that has won me some hard words from certain professional ex-Communists.

Mr. Atkinson's eyesight is so blurred by anger that he does not know what I said in my article. I wrote: "I myself am far from agreeing with those Americans who take it for granted that war with Russia is inevitable and oppose negotiation under any circumstances or on any terms." In other words, though we might not have exactly the same ideas about appeasement, I agree with him that "every effort should be made to achieve peace by negotiation without appeasement and without sacrificing principles." Hence it seems quite unlikely that I described persons who hold this view as "dangerous citizens." Nor did I call the editors of the *Nation* "dangerous citizens." I did say that the security of the United States would be endangered if some of the opinions of Mr. del Vayo, Miss Kirchwey, *et al.* were widely held. This remains true even though the editors are the noble souls Mr. Atkinson says they are. Noble souls have been wrong before now.

There is no satisfying Mr. Atkinson. If I had denounced the *Nation* as an out-and-out organ of Soviet propaganda, he would have accused me, justly, of exaggeration and sensationalism. As it is, because I was careful to say what I meant and no more, he accuses me of "playing both sides of the street," and implies that I acquired the art when I was a member of the Communist party. (It is not my impression that the use of qualification is a notable Communist trait.) Since I devoted several hundred words to explaining in what sense the *Nation* serves as an apologist for Soviet Russia, the use of the phrase, "in some sense," requires no further justification. As for the other sentence, which Mr. Atkinson quotes in part, it reads: "To some extent, no doubt, this is a matter of individual viewpoints, but it is also a product of tendencies that have existed in American liberalism for many years." Those tendencies, I may point out, were what the article as a whole was about. This is what he calls "playing both sides of the street."

MR. ATKINSON, like the faithful student of homiletics that he no doubt is, keeps his best point for the end. I can say to him frankly that I am not pleased that Congressman Dondero read my article into the Congressional Record, for his intention in doing so was obviously to besmirch the administration. (You did not fool Dondero, by the way: he knew and informed his colleagues that I was "an ex-Communist and a one-time editor of the Communist magazine *New Masses*.") But if the article proved to be "valuable ammunition" for Dondero, perhaps some share of the blame ought to be borne by the editors of the *Nation*, who chose to give the anniversary issue its peculiar slant.

And perhaps this point is not quite so telling as Mr. Atkinson thinks. The simple type of anti-Communist hysteria judges a man by his friends; hence the insistence on guilt by association. The hysteria against hysteria naturally adopts the reverse criterion and judges men by their enemies. You must not, these hysterics say, criticize anybody who is criticized by McCarthy; Dondero dislikes the *Nation*, and therefore the *Nation* must be good.

This is nonsense. A person is not immune from criticism because he calls himself a liberal. And in particular he is not immune from criticism by other persons who call themselves liberals. Liberalism can only be salvaged by constant examination and reexamination of the various ideas that are put forth with a liberal label. One of the great corrupting forces in American liberalism has been Communism, and although its influence has weakened, it has by no means been destroyed. It must be.

Towards any clarification of liberal issues Mr. Atkinson contributes singularly little. Instead of dealing with facts and ideas, he resorts to all the practices of which he accuses me, from "calculated smear" to "direct misstatement" and "calculated omission," with the reversed hysteric's reversed version of "guilt by association" thrown in. His letter is indeed an impressive performance, but as symptom not as argument.

GRANVILLE HICKS

Grafton, New York

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BOOKS IN REVIEW

A Fertile Error

THE JEWS AND MODERN CAPITALISM. By WERNER SOMBART. Translated by M. Epstein. With an introduction by Bert F. Hoselitz. The Free Press, Glencoe, Ill. 402 pp. $4.50.

Reviewed by H. R. TREVOR-ROPER

AN INTERESTING study could be made of the fertilizing effect of error in the intellectual world. What a revolution has been caused in historical studies by the enormous errors of those misguided but prolific Germans, Karl Marx, Max Weber, Werner Sombart! The importance of these men is that they obliged scholars to ask new questions: the fact that their own answers were erroneous is a secondary matter. Immediate falsities were soon exposed; ultimately a whole new science was born and more scrupulous thinkers gave exacter answers. Indirectly the new science and the exacter answers owe their existence to the first challenge.

The errors of Werner Sombart were certainly heroic. Himself an economist, not a historian, erudite indeed but careless of evidence, he was suddenly inspired by Max Weber's thesis about the relation of the Protestant ethic to capitalism to offer an alternative answer. Why, in the 16th century, had the center of economic power shifted from Southern to Northern Europe, from the Mediterranean to Antwerp, London, and Amsterdam? The discovery of America and the East Indies is no answer—is Hamburg really nearer to the Far East than Venice? Some other explanation is required. Weber had supplied one ideological explanation: Protestantism had created the capitalism of the North. In search of another, Sombart hovered briefly over a desperately insufficient understanding of history, and then, seeing it, or thinking he saw it, pounced. In 1492 the Jews had been expelled from Spain, in 1495 from Portugal, and later from some Italian cities. Whither had they gone? Some few had gone to Northern Europe. What need of further argument? The thesis is proved: "Modern capitalism is nothing more nor less than an expression of the Jewish spirit"; it only needs to be illustrated. Sombart's book *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, which appeared in Leipzig in 1911, is the illustration of it, rich, suggestive, intellectually irresponsible, and in its political consequences ultimately disastrous. Himself a Gentile, an admirer of the Jews, he became involuntarily a Founding Father of anti-Semitism.

TO MAINTAIN his thesis Sombart made a number of suppositions. First, he supposed that the Jewish religion was inherently capitalist (all the "capitalist" elements which Weber had detected in Puritanism were conveniently found by Sombart to have been borrowed from Judaism). Then he assumed that all medieval commerce in Europe had been in the hands of the Mediterranean Jews. Then he supposed that the economic expansion of Northern Europe followed the sudden arrival of these exiled Mediterranean Jews. Finally, to round off his thesis, he supposed that all the greatest financiers and merchants of these new economic centers were really Jewish. Unfortunately all these suppositions are totally wrong.

Sombart's definition of Judaism as an essentially "capitalist" religion is as demonstrably erroneous as Weber's similar definition of Calvinism. Religions in fact have no essential or immutable character: they respond to social circumstances and are subject—although of course the faces of the dogmatists are saved—to radical change. Calvinism may at one time have served the capitalist bourgeoisie of Geneva; but in the end it proved most appropriate to the backward crofters and fishermen of Scotland and Zeeland. The economic doctrines of Christianity were developed in a period of natural economy, in the Dark Ages; but they were soon adjusted to the needs of a fiscal empire, a commercial society. Similarly Judaism, first formulated among primitive pastoral

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tribes in landlocked hills, was only afterwards adapted to the cosmopolitan commercial life of a scattered people. This dependent aspect of religion was totally overlooked by Sombart as by Weber: consequently both were obliged to select their evidence. They selected such evidence as seemed to support their theories: they could easily have selected such as would ruin them.

SOMBART'S evidence that medieval European commerce was controlled by the Jews is just as selective, and the conclusion deduced therefrom consequently just as wrong. "Already in the Middle Ages," he writes, "we find that everywhere taxes, salt-mines and royal domains were farmed out to the Jews." To whom did the French and English kings farm out their taxes, their mines, their domains? To the Florentine bankers, the Franzesi, the Scali, the Frescobaldi. In Italy, the center of medieval capitalism, the Jews played no part at all, and it was Italians, not Jews, who developed capitalism in the rest of medieval Europe. Sombart's ignorance of medieval Italian capitalism is extraordinary. Faced with the inescapable figures of the great Genoese financiers of the 16th century, he simply refuses to believe in them. To suppose that members of the old Genoese aristocracy, Grimaldi and Spinola, really indulged in profitable trade is, he declares, self-evidently absurd: clearly it must have been immigrant Spanish Jews who, in the 16th century, "brought new blood into the decrepit economic body of Genoa." The fact that the Genoese aristocracy, the Grimaldi and Spinola themselves, so far from being a decrepit caste, had been a mercantile oligarchy, governing a great trading empire for continuous centuries, is simply ignored. Indeed, for his medieval assumptions, Sombart consistently ignores not only Italy but all Europe outside Spain and Portugal. There, for special reasons, the Iberian Jews, or Marranos, had largely controlled the trade of the Peninsula; but the Iberian Peninsula neither was nor is Europe.

Further, even if capitalism was developed in those Northern cities which received some (and only some) of the exiled Peninsular Jews, did this development in fact follow their arrival? When were the Jews first allowed to resettle in England? Timidly and tentatively they were readmitted by Cromwell in 1655, but it was still many years before they could trade freely or exercise financial power; and the City of London had been a great money market long before Cromwell. As for the specific instances advanced by Sombart, they are totally false. He states that the English Long Parliament was financed by Jews and that it was the Spanish Jew Carvajal who supplied the English Republic with funds. The financial methods of the Long Parliament and of Cromwell are well known: they were excise, land tax, capital sales, and loans from privileged companies and a few great financiers, all known and all English: there is no evidence that Carvajal (an army contractor and luxury merchant) ever lent them a penny. The same can be shown of Antwerp and Amsterdam, the basis of whose prosperity long preceded the arrival of the exiled Jews. In fact it is clear that the Jewish *émigrés* resorted to the Northern capitals not to create prosperity but to participate in it. They did indeed specialize and become rich in certain trades—in bullion, jewelry, luxuries, and army contracts—but even here their greatest contribution was not to the already developed economy of Northern Europe, in which they merely found themselves private corners: it was in the backward Turkish Empire, whither—ignored by Sombart—the majority of them had gone.

FINALLY, Sombart's use of evidence to prove that every great financier, every great financial discovery, was really Jewish is utterly irresponsible. Essential to his thesis is the Jewish character of the Dutch East India Company. To prove this desperate assumption would seem impossible—but not to Sombart: a glance at the portraits of the early governors is enough to convince him of their Jewish birth. And then there is the great Dutch imperialist, the founder of the company's empire in the East, Jan Pieterszoon Coen. Surely his real name was Cohen, and he a Jew—just as the real name of John Law, the Scottish founder of French banking, was presumably (as surmised by an anti-Semitic writer in the days of the Dreyfus case) Levi? And then there is Columbus—has not he also been claimed as a Jew? Indeed, since his expeditions were financed, in part, by confiscated Jewish goods, the discovery of America was really a Jewish achievement, and "Columbus and the rest were but managing-directors for Israel." One might as well say that Nazism was a Jewish movement since it too was fi-

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nanced, in part, from confiscated Jewish property.

WHAT need of further words? Sombart's thesis, as a thesis, is rubbish, and even the incidental truth which it may sometimes contain becomes, by his authority, worthless until tested at the source. Nevertheless, in a preposterous way, the book is a classic, for Sombart stated a problem which others have answered less wildly than he, and are answering still. His claims may be absurd, but at least we cannot deny the economic importance of the Jews—whether of the aristocratic Sephardim, the exiled Peninsular Jews, on whom Sombart based his theory, or of the far different German Jews by whose later activities he so indiscriminately illustrated it; and if we now give less lurid illustrations, less naive explanations of that fact—explanations drawn not from belief but from environment, from that self-conscious independence of surrounding society which the Jews have shared with other economically successful groups: Syrians in Rome, Armenians in Persia, Parsees in India, Moriscos in Spain, Huguenots in England, Quakers in England and America—at least we owe to Sombart part of the occasion for such an answer; and this, I have suggested, is the function of a classic.

Unfortunately Sombart achieved something else also. When Weber and he advanced their theories, each thought he was claiming a triumph for his chosen class. Was not capitalism itself a triumph, the basis of wealth and liberty and culture? Weber offered to the Protestants, Sombart to the Jews, the splendid boast of its paternity. Alas, our generation has reversed the formula. Capitalism, which is indeed the basis of our civilization, has been identified by resentful ideologues with its incidental abuses and the very word has become almost an insult. Who now wishes to be the father of that child? Instead of gratefully adopting the claim which Weber too generously offered them, Protestants now indignantly deny the charge and impute it, as incorrectly, to the protesting Jesuits. But these are the disputations of schoolmen: in the real world no one has suffered more cruelly from an intended compliment than those whom Sombart thought that he was honoring: the Jews. The clients of Weber have merely been denounced as capitalists and plutocrats; those of Sombart have been massacred.

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A Masque of Innocence

THE TROUBLED AIR. By IRWIN SHAW. Random House. 412 pp. $3.75.

Reviewed by NATHAN GLAZER

ONE by one, our young novelists are moving from considerations of war and its aftermath to considerations of politics. Irwin Shaw has selected a narrower canvas than Norman Mailer, but he covers it far more thoroughly. It is legitimate entirely to ignore the traditional bones of novel form with which Shaw covers his political exposition, and proceed directly to the politics itself: for Shaw's work is in effect the presentation of a political position, an attempt to explain the peculiar political scene of the 50's.

The 50's, it is becoming apparent, is to be the Decade of the Great Unveiling, when everyone's position on Communism, Communists, and fellow-travelers in the 30's and 40's is to be spread on the record. In the explanation each of us gives of this bit of autobiography, there is of course implied the attitude that a reasonable citizen should take to it. Shaw's explanation is given through the medium of a liberal, a former history professor who is now the director of a radio program. Five persons working on the program have been accused of being Communists by a publication akin to *Red Channels,* and the liberal director is told to fire them immediately. The novel traces his efforts to discover whether the five accused Communists really are or were Communists, and to decide what he should do or think about it.

In the course of this political Odyssey, we are introduced to many familiar figures—a few stock Communists (one neurotic), an advertising agency executive who has friends in high quarters and is interested in "policy-making," a rich self-made businessman (the sponsor) who hates Communists and dislikes liberals but will give anyone a "square deal," actors of various shades of apoliticalism who have been tied up with one "front" or another. Much of the political conversation is witty and perceptive, and the tone of the kind of political talk that goes on in this country today is often caught very well. But all through the book we are jarred by weird happenings—weird, that is, on the assumption that Shaw is writing a political novel about America today and not a melodrama or fantasy.

For example, our liberal hero discovers his phone is being tapped. Instead, like any self-respecting American, of calling the phone company to find out what the hell is going on, or calling the police, or getting in touch with the American Civil Liberties Union, he decides the tappers must be FBI men (so far as we know, he has never done anything illegal), and that he'd better keep quiet because this is happening to many thousands of people. Then, the hero is reading the newspapers and discovers that "the jails were slowly filling up with college graduates and people you had met at nice parties in the East 60's and 70's." Again the reader starts, and wonders what kind of parties these could have been and how many "college graduates" are now in jail that might not have been there a few years ago. Weirdest of all is our hero's shocked discovery, the climax of the novel, that his closest friend and student of fifteen years before has actually been a Communist for many years—indeed, he has been the leader of the cell in the radio broadcasting industry.

Now how is it possible that a former history professor who reads the newspapers has had a friend for fifteen years and not had the slightest suspicion he was a Communist? And this in the radio industry, where up till a short time ago—as in many spheres of American cultural and intellectual life—Communist views were at least as common as any strong opposition to them? How, too, could the uncovered Communist (not a spy, only a Communist) have resisted the temptation for fifteen years to try to get his closest friend—after all, a liberal, who had once chaired a meeting of the American Students' Union at college, and presumably an easy mark—into the movement? What can be the explanation for these mysteries? Is it that the liberal hero is a complete fool? No, this cannot be it, or at any rate Shaw does not think so—after all, he was a history professor and he is very witty. Is it that the Communist friend had excellent reasons for concealing the fact he was a Communist—though it seems all the other Communists in the radio industry knew it? Perhaps, but Shaw gives no such reasons.

Indeed, Shaw does not consider this a problem. He does not think it is a serious psychological problem, requiring the most careful explanation, that a man's best friend should be a Communist to that man's complete ignorance, and that a Communist should conceal his political views as well as his affiliation from his

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best friend of many years. Nor does Shaw think it is the novelist's job to explain why a supposedly intelligent man should be so out of touch with what is going on in America as to take it for granted that the FBI regularly taps the phones of people who have been vaguely connected with Communist fronts, and so misreads the papers—or reads such distorted papers—as to think of jails "filling up with college graduates," as if this "filling up" were some mysterious, inexorable process having no relation to any illegal acts. Since Shaw does not consider these to be problems, he leaves us to ask: why do the intelligent characters he creates behave like fools?

This foolishness, of course, is not personal to Shaw or his characters: it represents a point of view which is very widespread, and which is one of the predominant outlooks among liberals in this country. A key element in this point of view is the idea that we ordinary liberals just can't understand Communists and there is no point trying. An earlier form of this theory (expressed in Carey McWilliams' *Witch Hunt*) was that Communists really didn't exist at all but were figments of people's imagination. Shaw holds a more contemporary view: Communists do exist, but they are (1) either comic or neurotic or (2) if they are serious, they are really witches—they may well be your best friend without giving you any inkling of the fact, for true Communism is so unrelated to a person's ordinary motivations and behavior that the true Communist is completely immune to detection.

Now this theory has some interesting consequences. For example, it implies that anyone who says he has never met a Communist in his life, when clearly he has been surrounded by them, must be considered perfectly honest, because actually you really can't identify a Communist (this is the case of the liberal hero). I would suggest an alternative explanation: that it is Shaw who is not being completely honest. One has the odd feeling in this book that he is not telling us all he knows about his mouthpiece because if he did his theory would fall apart; that Shaw has performed a bit of self-censorship and decided it really "wasn't important" just what the political opinions of the leading character are or were. Indeed, it comes as something of a shock to discover, when the businessman sponsor asks our hero about it directly, that at school he was involved in a variety of activities together with Communists. One feels such a salient detail should have been brought to our attention earlier; and one feels, too, that our hero, and his creator, if they had pondered their experience more closely, would have discovered that Communism is not as mysterious as they now pretend: that only a few years ago many liberal Americans spoke quite blithely of the necessity to break eggs to make an omelette and heads to make a revolution, and the mentality which could placidly support some of the most horrible crimes in history was not so alien to the liberal mind as Shaw believes. One would think a novelist who presents us with a man honestly searching for the truth would have considered more closely what his opinions had been and were. But perhaps if the search were conducted too diligently there would be no way to explain the hero's naivety.

If Shaw is unwilling to pursue any inquiry into the life and opinions of his hero to explain his peculiar distortions in perception, it is because to Shaw himself these distortions are simple reality. Not that Shaw believes—as some of the details in the book suggest—that America is going fascist, or that Communism is not a threat to America—he rather half believes these things, and this perhaps is the chief mark of his type of liberal thinking today. He has given up in its pure form the obvious fantasies of Communist and Marxist ideology—this doctrine which claims that the facts before one's nose are less important in explaining what is going on than facts taken from some other countries and previous times. But he has not been able quite to proceed on his own without ideology, facing the facts as they are. Consequently he, and those who think like him, have decided to take a middle course: they take their ground halfway between the error of the ideology and the truth of an existing situation and only half believe both what the ideology tells them (that America is going fascist) and what the obvious facts indicate (that Communism is actively working to destroy America).

This procedure involves the inflation of some facts to show that America may be going fascist, and the deflation of others which would indicate that Communism is really a serious matter. Among the facts Shaw inflates are: the fascist opinions of the advertising agency head, the physical violence accompanying the attack on the program—extending to the son of the sponsor. And deflated is the quite overwhelming fact that for fifteen years Communists and their supporters dominated most forms

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of American cultural and intellectual life, in many areas carrying on a real reign of terror against their opponents. Through all this, Shaw's hero, we are asked to believe, slept, and he awoke only in 1951. At that time he did find a Communist: but careful not to lose his head, he decided to tread the middle path between what is largely illusion and what is stark reality.

The Newest Testament

TESTAMENT FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE. By BARBARA WOOTTON. Norton. 197 pp. $3.00.

Reviewed by PAUL KECSKEMETI

THE argument with which this book starts is familiar enough: The scientific method has been immensely successful in the investigation of natural processes and technological problems, and it is certain to be just as successful when applied to human and social problems. Further, it is high time that a supreme effort was made in this direction, for the human race faces swift extinction unless it abandons its old, pre-scientific ways of handling social and political matters.

So the question is not *whether* science can solve the fateful problems now confronting mankind: on this, no doubt is permitted. The only question we have to worry about is whether the scientific outlook will in fact be adopted in politics. Once this decision is made, we may hope that the danger will be overcome; failing this, mankind will perish.

Now if this were all that the author says, the book would not, in my opinion, deserve serious consideration, for this way of formulating the problem begs the question. To assume that those on whom the march of human events depends may agree to listen to impartial scientific counsel implies that they no longer care to settle controversial issues by force. But if this were actually the case, the danger from which the application of scientific knowledge is supposed to save us would no longer exist. Handing over the solution of social and political issues to scientific arbitration presupposes a kind of moral reformation which would in itself mean that the evils threatening mankind had been essentially conquered. Without such a reformation, the advice of science will not be heeded; and it is obvious that science cannot by itself bring about a moral reformation which is a prerequisite of its being accepted as an arbiter. Plainly, then, some sort of "pre-scientific" moral insight and reorientation on the part of humanity would be necessary to enable science to save civilization. The main argument put forward by Professor Wootton, namely that mankind can save itself only by abandoning all pre-scientific habits of thought in public matters in favor of scientific ones, is quite literally absurd.

Fortunately, however, this is not the entire content of the book. If we disregard the all-or-nothing proposition that we must either cast out all pre-scientific modes of thinking or perish, we may still examine fruitfully a more specific problem, namely, the question whether there are particular areas already ripe for the replacement of pre-scientific thought and action by scientific theory and behavior. This is a legitimate and pertinent question to ask, and much of what the author says is relevant to it.

TO UNDERSTAND correctly the message contained in this book, we have to consider the intellectual climate in which it was written. There prevails among British intellectuals (of whom Miss Wootton is one) a feeling that the violent controversies separating the two opposing political camps in Britain are to a large extent verbal and in the last analysis irrelevant. Actually, there is no disagreement about the kind of situation one would like to see materialize. Everybody—Laborite and Tory alike—agrees that useful things should be produced in abundance and distributed as fairly as possible. Yet, both parties combat one another violently on abstract issues they choose to treat as ultimates, although dispassionate economic analysis would tell them that if they did not balk on these side issues, they could agree on practical policies. This irrationality, this political fetishism, is probably what Miss Wootton has in mind when she speaks of "pre-scientific habits of thought" that ought to be abandoned in favor of a scientific outlook; and I agree that political life both in Britain and the United States would benefit by greater readiness to apply scientific reasoning to practical problems.

But the fact that progress of this kind is within reach implies that the conflicts dividing the opposing parties are not excessively grave. If Britain or the United States were on the verge of irrepressible social conflict, all hope of progress through a scientific reorientation of politics would vanish. Scientific analysis cannot create

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a consensus on ultimate questions where there is none; and it implies no disrespect to science to say that one of the things it cannot do is eliminate those conflicts that are potentially the most radical and most destructive ones.

Miss Wootton's plea for a wholehearted application of the scientific method to problems of theoretical knowledge, morality, art, and politics, often has much justice on its side, but in overstating her case, she weakens it. For instance, she puts great emphasis upon the "universality" of the scientific method, meaning thereby that all scientific assertions rest ultimately on testimony of the "five senses" which is essentially the same regardless of all personal and cultural differences; while she claims that hopeless disagreement is inevitable the moment one decides to rely on other kinds of evidence such as a purely philosophical or moral sense of certainty, or religious faith. According to her, the first stage in the construction of a scientific theory is "accurate observation of the data," meaning essentially sense-experience and nothing else; this is followed by the "formulation of a hypothesis" and, as a last step, "empirical verification" which again is a matter of sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching.

But scientific theory-making does not really proceed in this way. The data one observes have to be selected on the basis of a preliminary conception which is not provided by the "five senses" but by the activities of the entire brain, or mind, reflecting upon a vast amount of previously acquired experience. And in this experience, the "five senses" do not play a self-contained role; after all, they are parts of a living organism, intimately connected with a brain and a nervous system, and their testimony is always presented in a context which is also influenced by the structure, the needs, and the previous history of the entire organism. This is true of pre-scientific and extra-scientific as well as of scientific experience; the latter, too, does not start from scratch with pure sensations, proceeding towards the recording of "stable associations" among these sensations. If science were an activity of this kind, we could make an absolute distinction between it and extra-scientific experience; but since it is not, a valid delimitation of scientific from non-scientific procedures should be attempted in some other way.

It would then appear, I think, that there is valid extra-scientific, everyday experience besides scientific experience, and that we must try to be as reasonable in our everyday living and choosing as we presumably are in our scientific fact-collecting and theorizing. Miss Wootton seems to think that there is only one yardstick for determining the reasonableness of an everyday belief or choice, namely, the possibility of supplying scientific validation for it. Failing this, she holds, we must maintain a rigorously skeptical, agnostic attitude. Now it is certainly unreasonable to cling to factual beliefs that fly in the face of scientific evidence; to this extent, science *is* superior to unprocessed, non-scientific experience, and we must bow to its authority. But the principle breaks down when it comes to moral choices.

In the excellent chapter Miss Wootton devotes to the problem of science and morality (it is, to my mind, the best part of her book, together with the chapter in which she brilliantly criticizes the organismic and Marxian theories of society) she starts by admitting that science cannot determine moral ends. She admits further that morality is not a matter of arbitrary, individual preference, but that there are moral judgments which are in some sense true and valid. To me, these two statements imply that there is a rationale in moral thinking which does not depend on scientific evidence. Instead of drawing this, to me, inevitable conclusion, how-

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ever, the author maintains that since all this is so, we should treat our moral principles as hypotheses until some scientific validation can be found for them. This is a *non sequitur* if ever I saw one.

But while the logic of this reasoning is unfathomable to me, I can see very well the psychological reasons that impelled Miss Wootton to adopt this position. Even against her own feeling, she is afraid of admitting that any belief not derived from scientific investigation could be maintained as valid and in a sense true, for such beliefs, according to her, can only be dogmatic ones. It is in science alone that we can make assertions boldly and with a good conscience, for first, the source of these assertions is our five senses which we share with the lowliest Patagonian, and second, we are ready to abandon our assertions with the best of grace whenever we come upon evidence that controverts them. In the field of morals, however, all judgments we make must be based upon some authority, since they lack both the incontrovertible and universal evidence of the senses and the escape clause of future revision; the only consolation we may have is that some moral judgments, after all, may be more "consonant" with the scientific spirit than others.

I think that in the field of ethics this fear of dogmatism is quite unfounded. For we are not being dogmatic about our moral principles if we apply them impartially—dogmatically, if you will—against ourselves as well as against others. In morality, the check against dogmatism is not an "escape clause" of possible future repudiation, and not an alleged universality of experience which is highly doubtful even so far as scientific evidence goes; it is our resolution to stake our dignity as men upon really living up to a principle we hold valid for everybody. It is in this way alone that we may overcome the temptation to consider ourselves "superior" to out-groups and to "rationalize" our aggressions.

This is not to say that all factual knowledge is irrelevant to ethical judgment. On the contrary, all moral judgments should be read with a clause *rebus sic stantibus;* what they say is that "the facts being thus and so, this is the right thing to do." By refining and deepening our knowledge of facts, especially psychological ones, scientists do influence our moral thinking and our course of action on moral issues. There can be no question, here as elsewhere, of maintaining a watertight separation between the scientific and the extra-scientific. On the one hand, we have to admit that the moralist cannot judge well unless he has good factual evidence; on the other, we must also recognize that the ultimate inspiration of the scientist is not a scientific but moral and spiritual one.

Who Wrote the Bible?

THE BIRTH OF THE BIBLE: A NEW APPROACH. By IMMANUEL LEWY. Bloch. 234 pp. $2.50.

Reviewed by THEODOR H. GASTER

When the prophet Nathan addressed to David the famous words, "*Thou* art the man" (II Sam. 12:7), he could little have suspected, for all his prophetic powers, that some three thousand years later someone would apply the same words to *him,* albeit in a somewhat more complimentary sense. For what Dr. Immanuel Lewy claims, in this ingenious book, is that Nathan was not only *the* man but, in fact, the superman who virtually created the prophetic type of religion and who was responsible for the original draft both of the Pentateuch and of the Books of Samuel, not to speak of taking time out to compose the Book of Ruth.

Nathan, says Dr. Lewy, was the inspired advocate of a refined, bloodless, universalistic, spiritual, aniconic, and entirely moral form of religion, and in order to inculcate his teaching into the mind of his pupil Solomon, he took it upon himself to compile and edit a "purified" version of Israel's traditional lore and—as the Bible itself intimates (I Chron. 29:29, II Chron. 9:29)—a historical work dealing with the reigns of David and Solomon.

Nathan's compilation, however, was markedly at variance with the spirit which prevailed in priestly circles. The priests, says Dr. Lewy, objected to his rarefied and sublimated view of God, to his derogatory attitude towards the machinery and significance of the sacred cult, and to his rejection and elimination of those grosser elements of ritual and doctrine for which they were anxious to establish or fabricate an ancient authority. They therefore took pains to adapt his account to their own outlook, adding, interpolating, and often re-introducing those cruder features of the traditional legends which Nathan had carefully excised. Dr. Lewy's work is, in effect, an attempt to "bring a clean thing out of an unclean"—to distinguish nucleus from later accretions.

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Some of the results are, to say the least, startling. In Nathan's version, we are informed, there was no serpent in Eden, and the tree of forbidden fruit was the tree of love or sexual knowledge. Woman (who was *not* called Eve) was tempted not by the "subtil beast" but by Adam or simply by the luscious appearance of the fruit. Cain and Abel (who is identical with both Jabal and Jubal) quarreled over their sister Naamah, not over the relative value of meat and cereal offerings; our present version of the tale is a priestly distortion. When Noah emerged from the ark, he did *not* sacrifice to God, as our present text has it, because—in Nathan's view—delight in the flesh of animals was inconsistent with the character of a benign Deity who so loved his creatures that he swore never again to destroy them! The Ten Commandments, which time-honored tradition had associated with Moses, were represented in Nathan's narrative by a versified series of moral precepts; our present versions are priestly expansions. Balaam was, in Nathan's version, a believer in Jehovah who refused to yield to the blandishments of Balak, king of Moab, and could not bring himself to curse Israel. It was the priests who made him a pagan seer miraculously "converted."

Dr. Lewy's case is argued with ardor and vigor, and his presentation is informed with a nobility of spirit, a warmth of human feeling, and a sensitive, penetrating insight which is indeed refreshing. Nevertheless, it is the product of a scholarship in which artistic imagination has not been tempered by scientific control; and scholars will rightly object that the age is long since past when Biblical history and criticism can be based upon such purely subjective criteria.

The plain fact is that we know very little about Nathan or his philosophy, and what Dr. Lewy is actually doing is to substitute for our meager and imperfect knowledge a highly colored portrait (based largely on a fusion of three distinct Biblical Nathans!) of the kind of man who might have preached the kind of religion which a modern generation might be expected to relish. Anything in the Scriptural narrative which is in harmony with that religion is then promptly attributed to this imaginary author, while anything which is at variance with it is assigned to the manipulations of less progressive ecclesiastics. At the end of his exposition, Dr. Lewy is, of course, able to claim that his argument has proceeded on logical lines—forgetting entirely that its initial premise may have been utterly false.

Quite apart from this and many more technical difficulties, there are two general but decisive objections to Dr. Lewy's thesis. The first is that you cannot legitimately read present-day standards of morals and ethics into an earlier age. What may appear to our own and Dr. Lewy's developed outlook as inconsistencies and incongruities may not have appeared in the same light to our remote ancestors. To the primitive mind, for example, divine love need not have implied the corollary of gentleness; it could have been asserted in fury and even in savagery. Accordingly, when an ancient story so portrays it, it by no means follows that the story must have been written by two or more authors. Similarly, things like trial by ordeal or judgment by oracle were—and are—to the primitive a perfectly sound expression of what he understands by justice, and the fact that they are repugnant to us does not mean that even the most advanced of ancient thinkers need have seen anything immoral in them. By the same token also, a god who loves his creatures may nevertheless have fed on meat, simply because hunting was not regarded as murder. After all, even in our day, the Pope—who is regarded as the vicar of a loving God—is not therefore a vegetarian!

Then, too, it must be remembered that the development of moral ideas does not proceed in a rigidly chronological sequence; there is always a considerable overlap; and both primitive and advanced concepts usually exist side by side at the same time and often in the same mind.

The second major objection to Dr. Lewy's thesis is that it fails altogether to appreciate the hold which a traditional tale exerts upon the popular mind. Every standard feature of such a tale acquires a kind of canonical sanction and, although minor modifications certainly take place, any radical tampering with it, in the interests of doctrinal propaganda or even of innocent embellishment, is immediately recognized and immediately resisted. No modern child, for instance, will stand for Little "Blue" Riding Hood merely on Senator McCarthy's say-so, nor, even if Cardinal Spellman were himself to tell him so, would he be lightly persuaded that Puss wore bishop's gaiters or that it was Antichrist, and not Humpty Dumpty, who fell off the wall.

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Now, many of the stories in the Book of Genesis are, in fact, mere Hebrew versions of folk tales told elsewhere in the ancient Near East and likewise paralleled in several other parts of the world. It is therefore scarcely to be assumed that anyone reared on those tales would have stomached the bowdlerized and emasculated versions of them which Dr. Lewy attributes to the high-minded and indefatigable Nathan, or have failed to object to the excision and adaptation of familiar features. Thus, Noah's sacrifice on emerging from the ark is part and parcel of the original tale of the Flood, and appears already in the Babylonian version; any omission of it on Nathan's part would therefore at once have excited comment. Similarly, the tale of a man who wrestles with a spirit is paralleled in the folklore of many countries, so that Nathan could scarcely have expected anyone familiar with traditional lore to have tolerated the "purified" version suggested by Dr. Lewy, in which the patriarch Jacob struggled, beside the ford of Jabbok, not with a spirit but with a human being. In other words, traditional tales are characteristically more primitive than the people who retell them, but those people are characteristically conservative about them. A man of the genius which Dr. Lewy ascribes to Nathan could never have been so foolish as to imagine that he could inculcate religious truths by convincing the infant Solomon that Old Mother Hubbard found a box of wheaties.

Lastly, it is to be feared that Dr. Lewy too frequently rests his case on a cavalier attitude towards the Hebrew text of the Bible. Where a passage is completely unintelligible, and where the Ancient Versions provide no help, it is, of course, permissible to resort to conjectural emendation. But to alter a straightforward text simply because it does not square with a preconceived interpretation is a procedure which condemns itself. Yet, in discussing Jacob's blessing on Joseph (Gen. 49:22-26), Dr. Lewy emends no less than fifteen out of a total of sixty-one words—that is, approximately one in every four! And in the case of the oracles of Balaam he takes even more violent liberties. That text, for example, mentions "the children *of Sheth*" (Num. 24:17), who have now been identified with the normadic Shûtu, of the 2nd millennium BCE. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the received reading is authenticated by a paraphrase in Jeremiah 48:45, Dr. Lewy promptly emends it to read "the children *of [Pele]sheth*," i.e. the Philistines, and on this basis finds confirmation of his theory that the oracles were really written centuries later!

If, however, Dr. Lewy's book is read not as a scientific treatise but simply as an artistic appreciation of Biblical storytelling, and if its erratic central thesis be overlooked, it will be found to be by no means unrewarding for its freshness of approach and its aesthetic sensibility.

The Era of Jew Süss

THE COURT JEW. By SELMA STERN. Translated from the German by Ralph Weiman. Jewish Publication Society. 312 pp. $4.00.

Reviewed by ALFRED WERNER

THIS study will be of enormous value to any future scholar who may wish to rewrite the story of Central European Jewry in the light of 20th century experiences. Earlier historians, seeing all streams of Jewish history discharge themselves automatically into the peaceful ocean of emancipation, did not dwell at length on the individualistic phenomenon of *Hofjuden,* and touched only upon its more sordid aspects. Graetz, for instance, does not even mention Joseph Süss Oppenheimer, whereas Miss Stern hails him as the first Jew to influence the course of German history, and as the first Jewish representative of the new spirit of enlightenment. For her, the Court Jew is not a distasteful figure, spoiling the traditional picture of Jewish saints and scholars, but a useful catalytic agent, speeding up a historical process.

The author skilfully reconstructs the century, ranging from the end of the Thirty Years' War to the start of the Seven Years' War, when many of the two hundred-odd rulers within the Holy Roman Empire employed Jews as commissaries, contractors, diplomatic couriers, masters of the mint, and in other highly responsible positions. Replacing, as it were, the moneylenders of the Middle Ages, yet operating on a much larger scale, these able and strong-willed Court Jews helped usher in the era of early capitalism. They were a logical by-product of the Baroque period when the absolute rulers of the middle-sized or small autonomous states needed capable financiers and organizers—

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loyal to none but the prince—who could draw up budgets, administer the treasury, collect taxes, and so forth.

Why did Jews occupy these posts? Because nobody else wanted them. Or, as another historian put it: "Professions, vital or considered vital for a nation during a particular period, but hated by its nationals, were left to the Jews without a struggle, gave them influence and made them feared and despised as the representatives of such professions" (F. R. Bienenfeld, *The Germans and the Jews,* 1939). A 17th-century satirist bitingly remarked: "All Jews are commissaries and all commissaries are Jews"; yet he did not know that they stood as much chance of losing as they did of making money. Actually, as Miss Stern points out, most of the Court Jews died bankrupt.

The most widely known of them all, the aforementioned Oppenheimer, perished on the gallows. Miss Stern devotes a great deal of space to his story, for "Jud Süss" is an almost symbolical figure. Though several generations considered him "the embodiment of evil, the living Antichrist," he was, in fact, "a farsighted statesman with new and bold ideas." Whatever was sordid about this financial wizard of Württemberg lay in the nature of the sordid activities he was forced to pursue. His was a split personality. He tried to adapt himself as closely as possible to the cynical period, yet he was tied to his own religious heritage. He slept with the noblewomen of the Court, yet he wished to marry the daughter of an orthodox Jew. He could not help harming some people who suffered from the innovations he introduced: "Because of his role in eliminating the old order and establishing the new, the Court Jew became for the reactionary forces of his time a symbol of . . . revolution. . . ."

Summing up, Miss Stern suggests that the Court Jews lived their tragic and unreal lives because they were "placed by Fate in a period when a synthesis between Judaism and the Zeitgeist was completely impossible." So far, so good. But the author contradicts herself when she states that by understanding the fate of the Court Jew one could "at the same time understand the fate of the European Jew who attempted to create a synthesis of two different worlds, without surrendering his identity." Obviously, she goes too far in her retroactive pessimism. After all, she herself implies that "a synthesis between Judaism and the Zeitgeist" was *conceivable,* and it will be practicable in a world entirely free of all shadows of totalitarianism. Be that as it may, we, and the generations after us, will gather from Miss Stern's excellent treatise that the Jew, as an individual, is doomed to failure whenever society treats him as a means to an end, not as and end in himself.

Book Reviewers in this Issue

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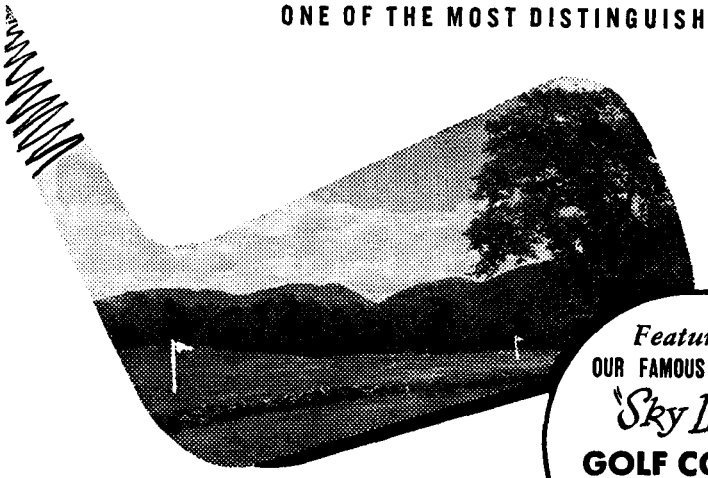

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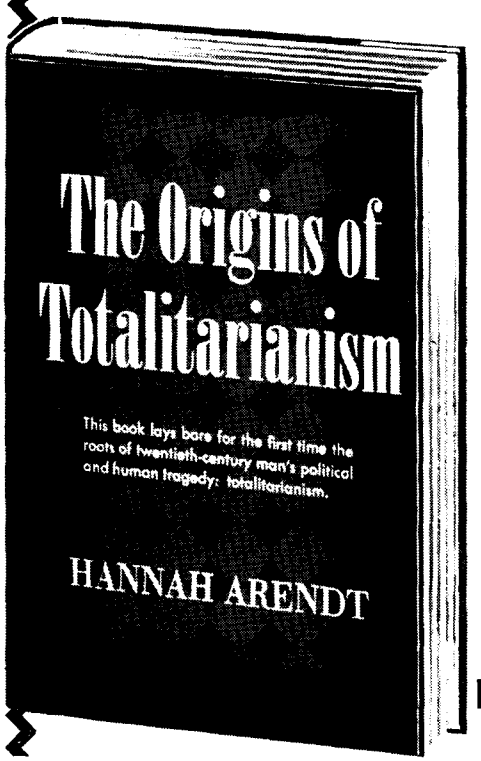
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